11 DELICIOUS GRILLING RECIPES Page 56
SAVEUR
Savor a World of Authentic Cuisine
ITALY'S BEST WHITE WINES
Page 28
Charleston's Soul Food Cafés
Page 78
FANTASTIC FRENCH FRIES
Page 35
Secrets of Mexican Cooking
Learn how to make the world's best tacos, enchiladas, soups, and other classics from south of the border Page 41
138
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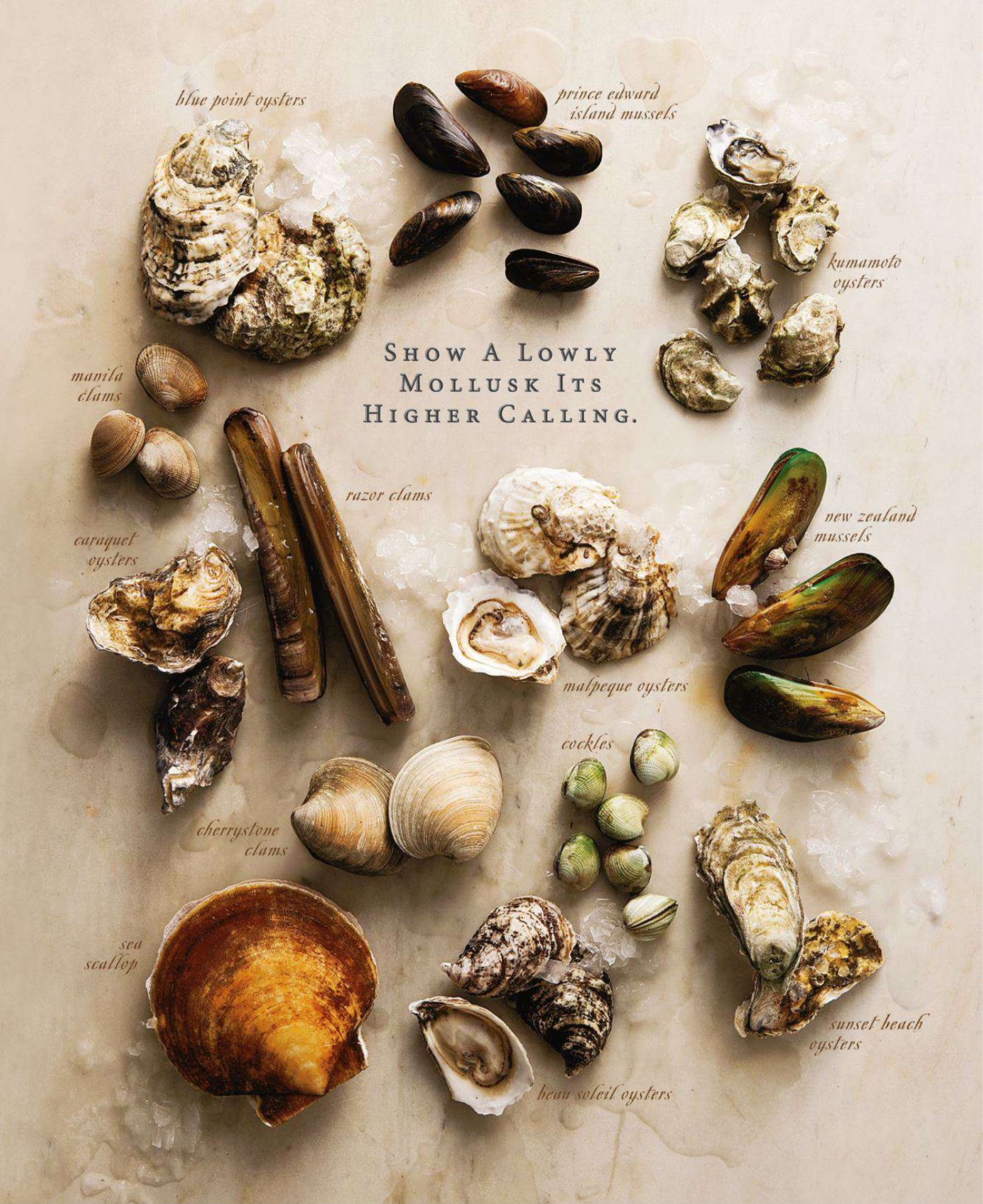
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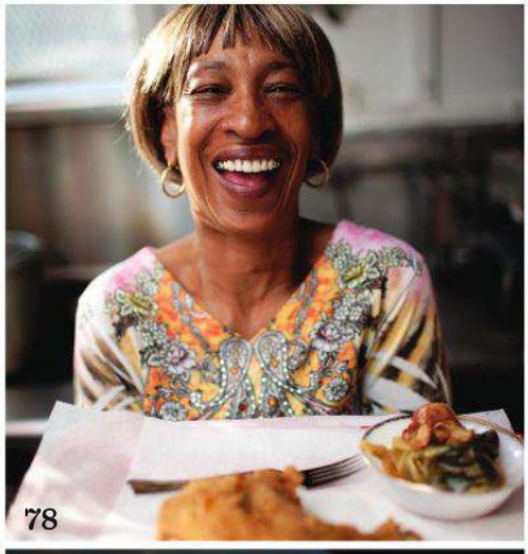

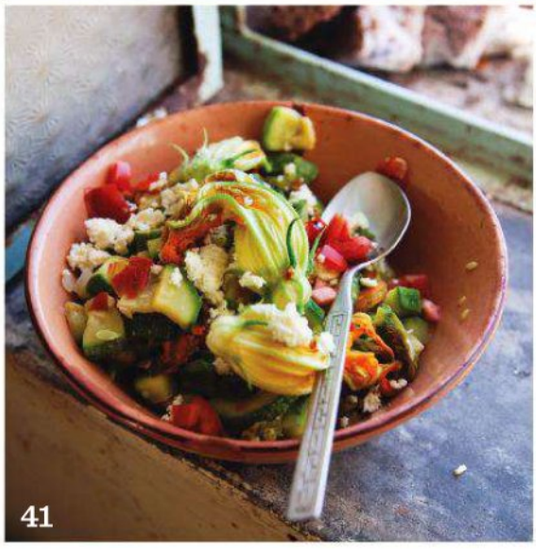

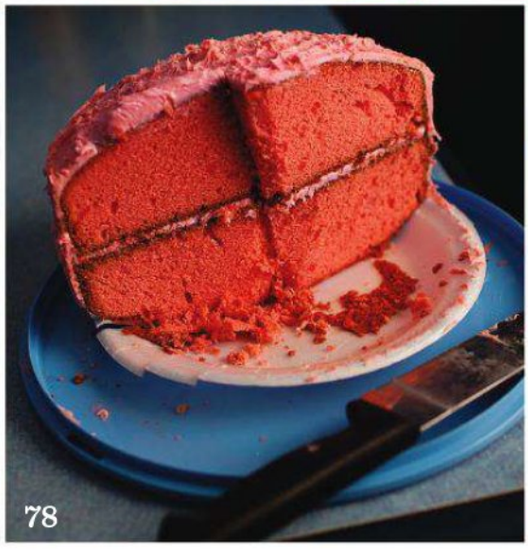

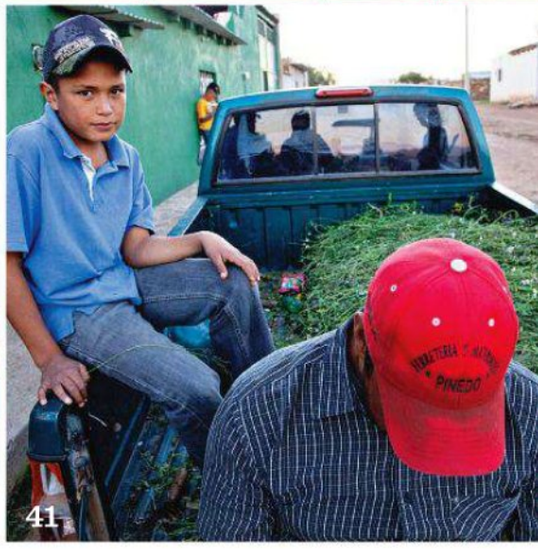

Features

41 Mexico Feeds Me A young writer's journey to his parents' birthplace in Zacatecas, Mexico, introduces him to the region's bold and colorful cuisine—a street vendor's airy handmade *gorditas*; home-cooked classics like *mole verde* and potato tacos. Plus, a step-by-step guide to making the perfect enchilada, and more. *By Javier Cabral*

56 The World of Satay Sizzling, savory, and infinitely adaptable, this southeast Asian street food is ideal for warm-weather grilling. From Singaporean-style shrimp to Thai spice-rubbed pork to Malaysian tumeric-tinged chicken, a celebration of skewered snacks. *By James Oseland*

66 Riga, Revisited More than three decades after her parents emigrated from the Latvian capital to the United States, a writer brings them back to Riga for a culinary homecoming. There, they rediscover the humble local foods—tangy rye bread pudding, earthy beet salad, pounded pork cutlets, fluffy berry mousse—that once sustained them. *By Gabriella Gershenson*

78 Specialty of the House Slow-cooked collard greens, buttery corn bread, smoky lima beans, and other deeply flavorful Gullah classics set the soul food cafés of Charleston, South Carolina, apart. A tasting tour of the best of these establishments highlights the people—and the dishes—behind the city's homegrown cuisine. *By Jane and Michael Stern*

Cover *Potato Tacos* PHOTOGRAPH BY TODD COLEMAN

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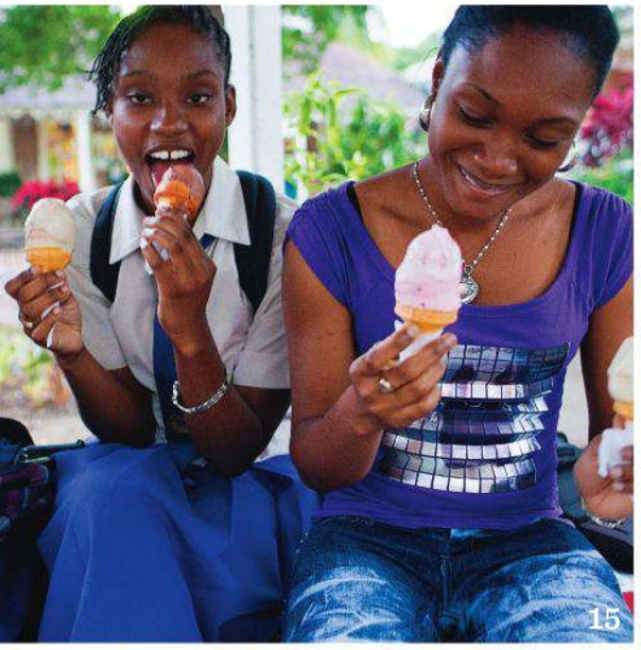

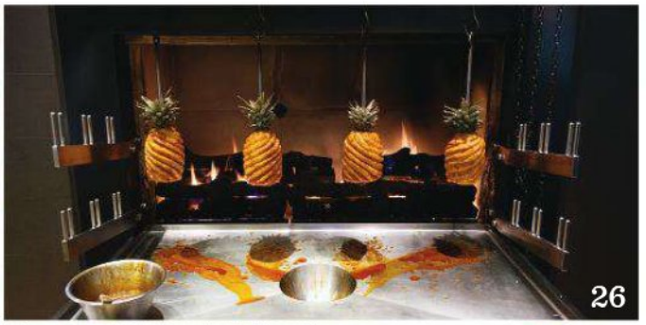

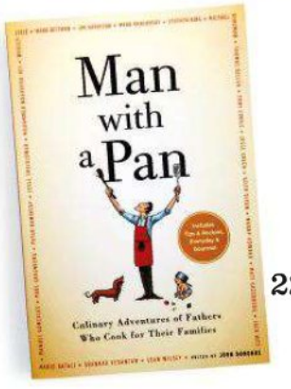

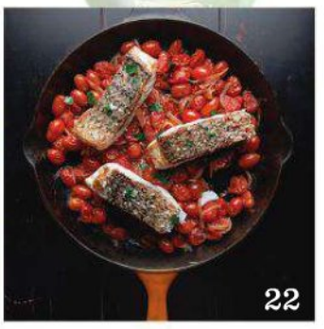

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Departments

12 First
This month, SAVEUR publishes a collection of its best comfort food recipes. *By James Oseland*

15 Fare
Jamaica's beer-flavored ice cream; the rewards of urban foraging; five top food museums; Appalachian comfort at the Carter Family Fold; plus Book Review, Agenda, and more.

25 Review
Britain's most daring chef entices with a creative approach to classic dining at his latest restaurant, Dinner by Heston Blumenthal. *By Jay Rayner*

28 Cellar
Thanks to refined winemaking techniques, Verdicchio and other wines from Italy's Le Marche region are better than ever. *By Betsy Andrews*

31 Essay
One author explores the mysterious life history and culinary allure of eel. *By James Prosek*

35 Classic
In the bistros of Brussels, Belgium, iconic *moules frites* combine three beloved foodstuffs—fragrant mussels, twice-fried potatoes, and silky mayonnaise—in one satisfying dish. *By Nick Malgieri*

38 Source
Piri-piri sauce made in Asbury Park, New Jersey, captures the chile-laced flavors of Portuguese Africa. *By Ganda Suthivarakom*

91 In the Saveur Kitchen
The delicious varieties of Mexican prickly pear cactus fruit; an unexpected use for farina; Charleston's essential meat market; dried chile flakes.

95 Pantry
How to find the ingredients, equipment, and resources in this issue. *By Ben Mims*

100 Moment
In Rhode Island, local cuisine takes the form of a chili dog. *Photograph by Todd Coleman*

Fare
Stout Ice Cream 16
Quick Fish Filets in Tomato Sauce 22

Classic
Moules Frites (Steamed Mussels and Fries) ... 36

Zacatecas
Arroz a la Mexicana (Mexican Rice) 53
Asado de Bodas (Pork in Red Chile Sauce) 53
Elote (Spiced Mexican Corn) 53
Enchiladas 53
Frijoles de la Olla (Stewed Beans With Pico de Gallo) 53
Gorditas de Huevos (Masa Cakes Stuffed With Eggs) 53
Gorditas Zacatecanas (Zacatecas-Style Baked Masa Cakes) 53
Guiso de Flor de Calabaza (Squash Blossom Sauté) 54
Mole Verde Zacatecano (Zacatecas-Style Green Mole With Chicken) 54
Papas en Chile Rojo (Potatoes in Red Chile Salsa) 55
Pastel de Tres Leches con Coco (Three Milks Cake With Coconut) 55
Rebocado (Pork Neck and Purslane Stew) 55
Sopa de Habas 55
Tacos de Papa (Potato Tacos) 55

Satay
Acar Timun (Javanese Cucumber and Carrot Pickle) 62
Ajad (Thai Cucumber Relish) 62
Chile-Rubbed Beef Satay 62
Hoi Malaeng Puu (Southern Thai-Style Mussel Satay) 62
Kafta (Lebanese Beef Kebabs) 62
Lemongrass Pork Satay 62
Muu Satay (Thai Pork Satay) 62
Reshmi Kebab (Indian Chicken Kebab) 63
Sambal Kecap (Sweet Soy Dipping Sauce) 62
Satay Ayam (Chicken Satay) 63
Satay Kambing (Lamb Satay) 63
Satay Lilit (Balinese Tuna Satay) 63
Satay Udang (Shrimp Satay) 63
Saus Kacang Tanah (Javanese Peanut Sauce) 63
Shish Kebab 63

Riga
Cūkgaļas Sautējums (Pork Stew) 76
Debesmanna (Cranberry Mousse) 76
Karbonāde (Pork Cutlets With Chanterelle Cream Sauce) 76
Kartupeli ar Dillēm (Boiled Potatoes With Dill) 76
Kolrābju Salāti (Kohlrabi Salad) 76
Maizes Zupa (Rye Bread Pudding) 76
Pilditas Vafeles (Waffle Cones Filled With Sweet Cheese and Berries) 77
Selyodka Pod Shuboy (Layered Herring Salad) 77
Speķa Pīrāgi (Bacon Turnovers) 77

Charleston
Baked Chicken With Peppers 88
Cabbage and Collards 88
Corn Bread 88
Fried Chicken 88
Hoppin' John (Black-Eyed Peas and Rice) ... 88
Macaroni and Cheese 88
Okra Soup 89
Stewed Green Beans 89
Stewed Rutabagas 89
Strawberry Cake 89

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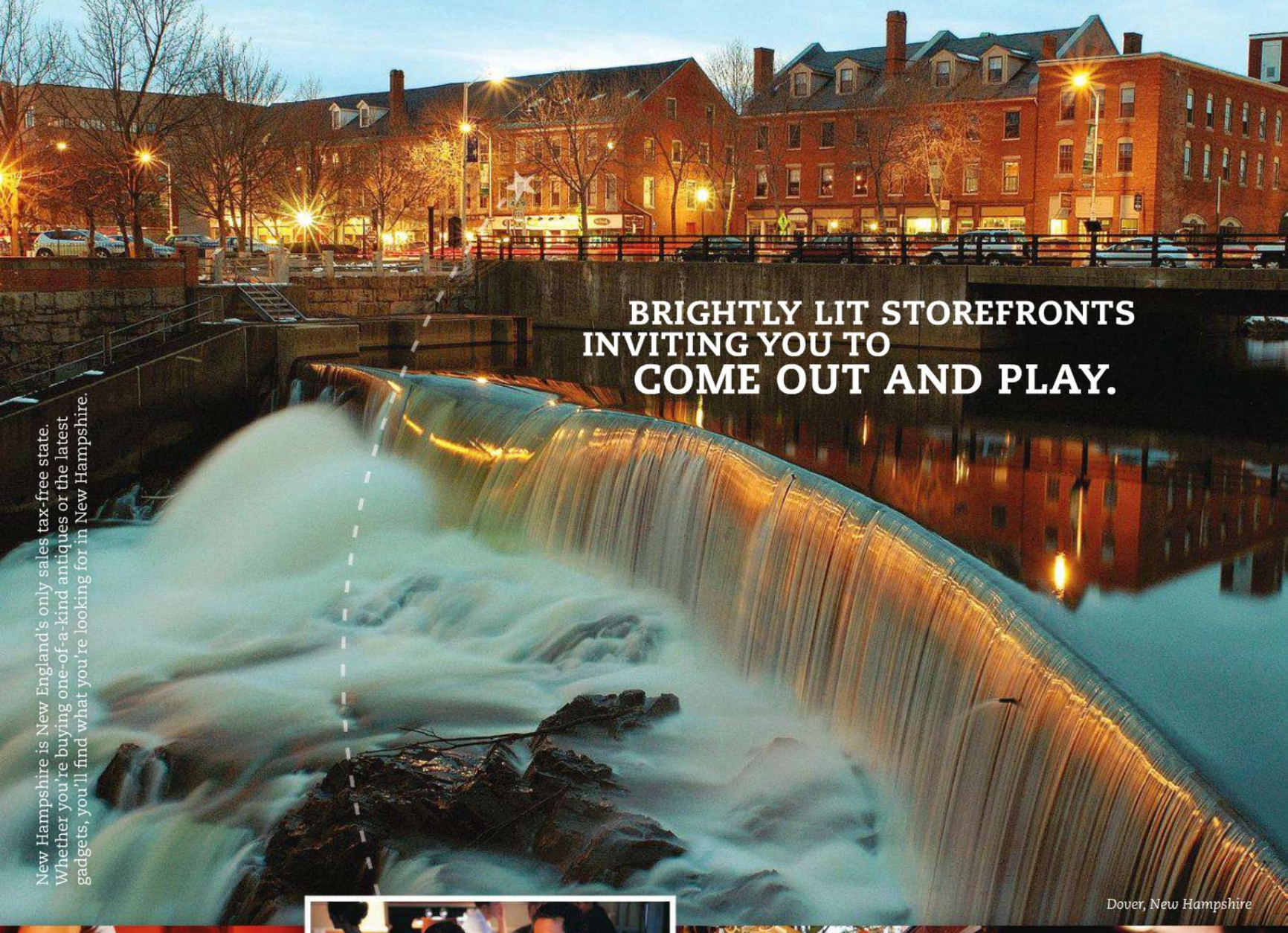

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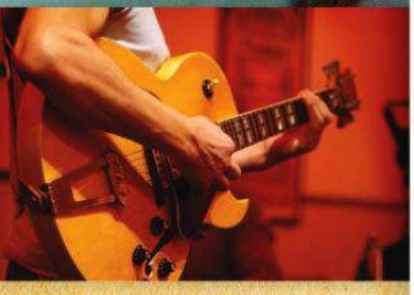

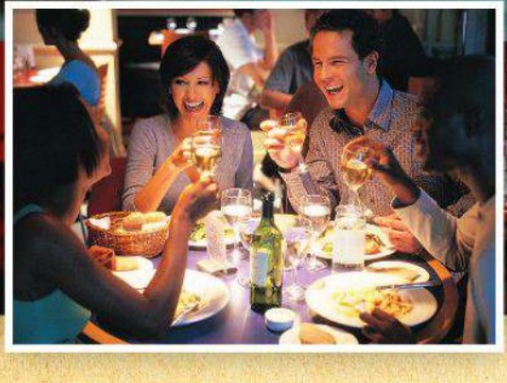

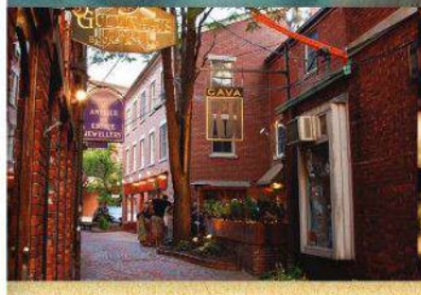

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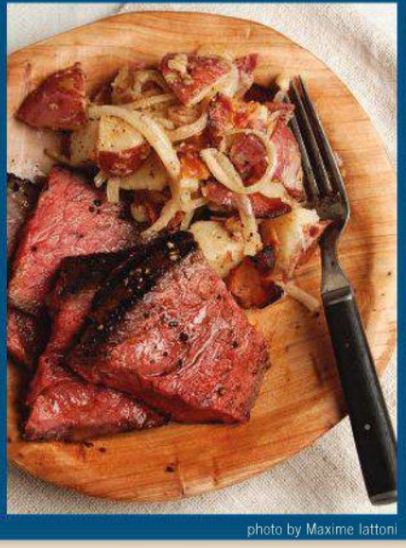

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All Together Now

The world's best comfort food dishes, collected in a single book

ONE THING READERS always tell me is that they save issues of SAVEUR and return to certain recipes again and again; it's probably the most gratifying thing an editor can hear. Over the years, the staff has pulled together collections of those go-to recipes in cookbooks themed for easy reference, the most recent being *Saveur Cooks Authentic Italian* (Chronicle Books, 2001). Gathering recipes from so many stories in a single volume always produces a result greater than the sum of its parts.

When the editors sat down to talk about what our next cookbook might look like, we knew we wanted to do something different this time. We free-associated, calling out memorable dishes from recent issues. There was the *tagliatelle ragù* from Nancy Harmon Jenkins' story about Bologna, Italy (March 2007). The savory Beijing-style noodle stir-fry from our May 2010 issue was at the top of everyone's list, as were the feta-stuffed hot peppers—oh, those peppers!—that graced the cover of our Greece issue (August/September 2010). The Hungarian chicken paprikash in our January/February 2010 issue, a beloved family recipe shared by reader Isabelle Zgonc, is a staff-lunch favorite at our office; we knew intuitively that any book we might create would be incomplete without it.

What do these recipes—from all corners of the globe—have in common? We realized that each, in its own way, is designed not only to nourish but to satisfy, console, even indulge. This is comfort food, and we've found it all over the world: in New York delis, Bangkok street stalls, and, above all, in home kitchens, where cooks have welcomed us and shown us how they feed their families.

After two years of work, I'm proud to present *The New Comfort Food: Home Cooking from Around the World* (Chronicle Books), available now in bookstores. What makes this compendium of over 100 recipes so special is that it goes beyond American comfort food classics—though plenty of those are included—and shares the vibrant range of foods that make people everywhere happy. Like the recipes in this issue—the red chile enchiladas that author Javier Cabral learned to make from his aunt in Zacatecas, Mexico ("Mexico Feeds Me," page 41); the beautiful fried chicken at Martha Lou's Kitchen in Charleston, South Carolina ("Specialty of the House," page 78)—the book represents some of the very best cooking on the planet.

—James Oseland, Editor-in-Chief

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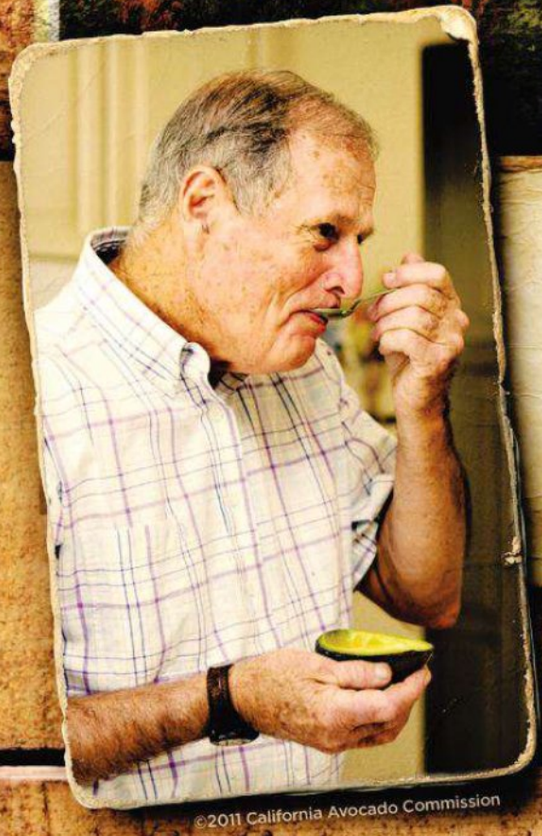

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For twenty-five years, California Avocado grower Bill Coy worked happily as a marketing executive in the big city. During his time off, Bill would retreat to his father-in-law's California Avocado grove, helping him work the land. And that's when he truly fell head over heels. Bill left the marketing world behind and turned his vacation into a permanent leave-of-absence. He bought his own grove and planted each tree by hand, nurturing them into strong bearers of rich, creamy California Avocados. And since the expert care Bill provides shines through in every bite, it's no wonder his labor of love tastes so delicious.

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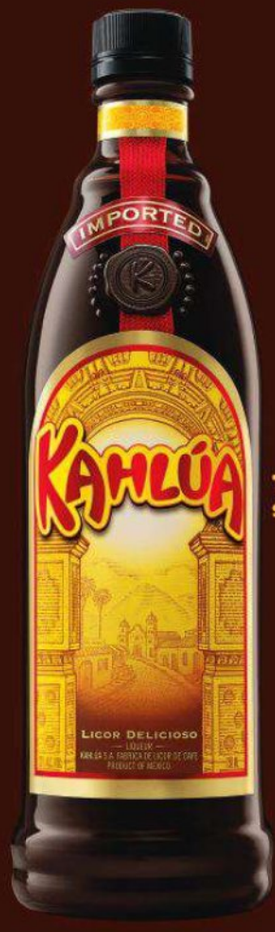

THE ORIGINAL
SPIRIT OF VERACRUZ

FARE

Beauty and Bounty From the World of Food, Plus Agenda and More

Special Scoops

In Jamaica, beer makes ice cream even sweeter

I'VE NEVER BEEN much of an ice cream eater; the dairy products I truly adore are cheese and sour cream. But the scoops at Jamaica's I-Scream have me enthralled. At this shop in the courtyard of Devon House, Kingston, Jamaica's, landmark manor house—built 130 years ago by merchant George Stiebel, the island's first black millionaire—crowds gather nightly to lick luscious ice cream in tropical flavors that are tough to find in the States: tangy soursop, perfumey guava, and, in winter-time, sweet-tart sorrel. The just-picked island fruit makes the creamy dessert so fresh tasting that it wins over even a tough sell like me.

But my favorite flavor here is made with an ingredient I love more than dairy: beer. Stout, a dark Irish ale brewed with roasted

Shanique Grandison, left, and Sherene Grandison eat stout and other ice cream flavors at I-Scream in Kingston, Jamaica.

LANDON NORDEMAN

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AGENDA

May 2011

7

LOWCOUNTRY SHRIMP FESTIVAL

McClellanville, South Carolina

May marks the beginning of shrimp season for South Carolina's coastal towns. At this annual festival, local clergy bestow blessings upon trawlers for a bountiful season, then 1,000 pounds of sweet, local white shrimp is fried, or boiled with Old Bay seasoning, sausage, corn, and potatoes, for what's known as Frogmore Stew, or Lowcountry boil. Information: lowcountryshrimpfestival.com

7–8

LUDLOW SPRING FESTIVAL

Ludlow Castle, Shropshire, England

Attendees enjoy their share of Ludlow Brown (a rye, oat, and wheat loaf) and other stone oven–baked breads, along with pork, goat, and beef bangers, all washed down with samples of local beers, apple ciders, and perry (pear cider) at this festival in rural western England. Baking and sausage-making demonstrations fill out the weekend. Information: ludlowspringfestival.co.uk

14–16

THE LYCHEE FAIR AND FESTIVAL

Chiang Rai, Thailand

The lychee, an ancient Chinese tree that has been cultivated in northern Thailand for centuries, bears its red-skinned, perfumed fruit this month. Chiang Rai, a city famous for its lychee, honors the fruit with tastings, a handicraft mart, a colorful parade, and the crowning of the year's Miss Lychee Orchard. Information: tourismthailand.org

15

Birthday:

JOSEPH A. CAMPBELL

1817, Bridgeton, New Jersey

In 1869, fruit vendor Joseph Campbell partnered with icebox maker Abraham Anderson to manufacture a range of canned foods. Four years later, Campbell bought out his partner, becoming the sole proprietor of a company whose big seller was a beefsteak tomato soup. Profits soared in the late 1890s, when the company's chemist, John Dorrance, invented a soup with a lower »

barley or malt, was brought to the island in the 1820s. The stout introduced to Jamaica was made with extra malt, to produce the needed alcohol to withstand the long sea journey from the Continent. I-Scream's stout ice cream is churned using Guinness Foreign Extra Stout and Dragon Stout, a local brew that Jamaicans have long partnered with dairy in a punch made with nutmeg, vanilla, and condensed milk. At 7.5 percent alcohol, these beers are boozier, maltier, and sweeter than standard Irish stouts. They make terrific ice cream: rich but (because the beer adds liquid to the batter) not too creamy, with a bittersweet malt flavor that adds complexity to the dessert. On a balmy evening beneath the banyan trees, it's the best nightcap of all. —*Betsy Andrews*

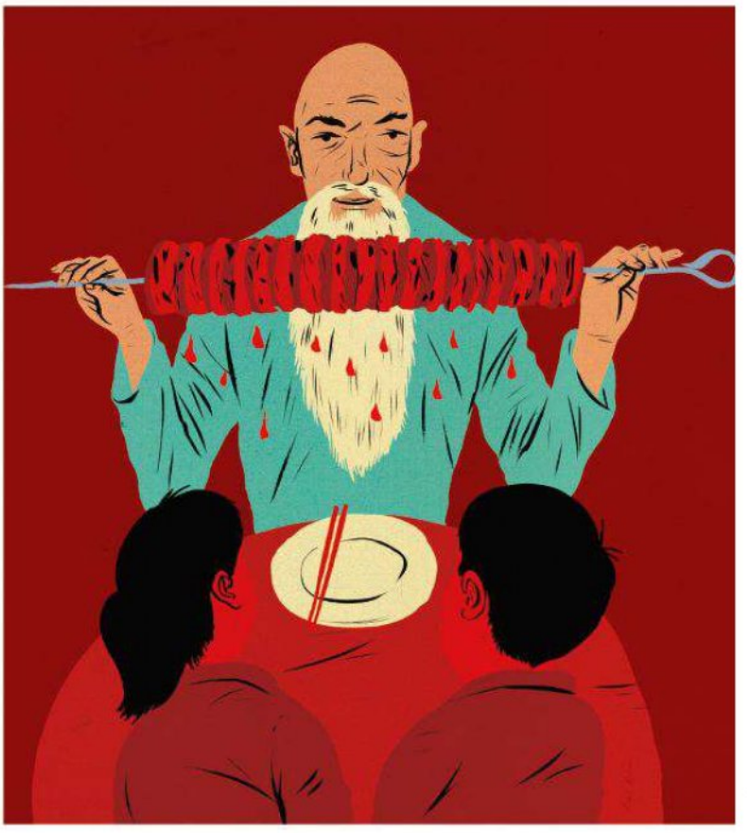
Stout Ice Cream

Makes about 1 quart

The malt flavor of strong stout, such as Guinness Foreign Extra or Dragon, adds a bittersweet contrast to this rich, custardy ice cream, which is based on one served at the I-Scream shop at Devon House in Kingston, Jamaica.

- ¾ **cup sugar**
- ½ **tsp. kosher salt**
- 6 **egg yolks**
- 2 **cups heavy cream**
- 1½ **cups strong stout (one 11–12-oz. bottle)**
- 1 **tsp. vanilla extract**

Whisk together sugar, salt, and egg yolks in a 4-qt. saucepan until smooth; stir in cream and cook, stirring constantly, over medium heat, until the mixture thickens and coats the back of a spoon, about 4 minutes. Pour mixture through a fine strainer into a medium bowl, and whisk in stout and vanilla; refrigerate until chilled. Process in an ice cream maker according to manufacturer's instructions. Transfer to a resealable plastic container and freeze until firm, at least 4 hours.



Eastern Riches

In Hong Kong, leftovers are a delicious treasure

BACK IN THE 1980s, visiting my grandfather in Hong Kong meant eating well. Grandpa would wake up in the morning, go to the Cantonese restaurant down the street—the one with the roasted meats hanging in the windows—and return with a skewer loaded with burnt ends and trimmings. "Are the grandkids visiting?" the shopkeepers would ask when he made his purchase. They would always throw in steamed buns with the meats. These elements made up Grandpa's assemble-at-home version of a snack that was once found throughout the city: *gum tsin gai*, or gold coin chicken.

Sleepy-eyed, I would watch him slide portions off the skewers to wedge between the soft white buns: a medallion of *char siu* (barbecued pork), a hunk of chicken liver, a slab of pork fat—all of which had been brushed with a honey–soy sauce glaze and flashed under the restaurant's broiler. Even with its bun, it was a mess to eat. The sauce stuck to our teeth, and oil slipped down our forearms. But was it tasty. First, there was the subtle smokiness of the pork; the smooth chicken livers added a metallic zing; and the moist bits of fat burst inside our mouths.

From the early 1920s on, at restaurants with roasting ovens, gold coins—a reference to the tidbits' circular shape and two-bite size—were stacked high on platters like doubloons, a means of using leftover meat. They were favored by laborers who saw the hearty parcels as a way to sustain their energy. But by the end of the 20th century, a new generation of diners had dismissed the dish as unrefined. Slowly, gold coins became less common, and the extra bits were reserved for staff meals instead. But I still have a favorite place where I go for a fix: the Manor Restaurant, a dim sum specialist that roasts its own meats. I make sure to cozy up to the chef there so he'll prepare me an extra-thick portion of gold coins, with double the filling. —*Amy Ma*

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Best of the Blogs

Last year, SAVEUR kicked off our first-ever Best Food Blog Awards, in which you, our readers, voted on your favorite sites in nine categories, including Best Regional Cuisine, Most Innovative Video Content, and Best Food Photography. Through your votes, we immersed ourselves in some of the web's most engaging culinary content, a true cross-section of cooking, writing, and eating. (A few of the 2010 winners are below.) Now, we're doing it again. Vote until May 12 for your favorite food blogs in 16 categories at saveur.com/blogawards.

1. *With inspiring photographs and original recipes (like the berry gratin pictured here), gluten-free site La Tartine Gourmande (latartinegourmande.com) won saveur.com's 2010* ***Best Special Interest*** *blog award.*

2. *Garnering awards for* ***Best Food Photography*** *and* ***Best Individual Post*** *was Smitten Kitchen (smittenkitchen.com), where Deb Perelman (pictured) shares recipes for crowd-pleasers ranging from coq au vin to homemade pop tarts.*

3. *The 2010 winner for* ***Best Regional Cuisine*** *was Homesick Texan (homesicktexan.blogspot.com), authored by the Houston-born Lisa Fain, who cooks up Tex-Mex creations like these beef flautas in her tiny New York City kitchen.*

4. *The* ***Best Culinary Travel*** *award went to Café Fernando (cafefernando.com), by itinerate blogger Cenk Sonmezsoy, who inspires with travel stories, photos, and original recipes for dishes like this Biscoff-filled devil's food cake.*

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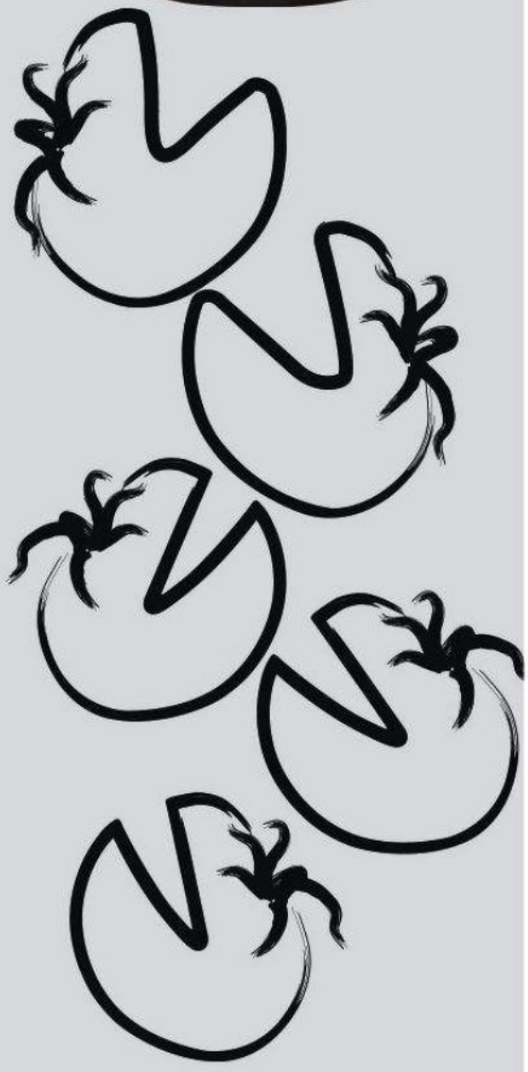
Tempting your Taste



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Eternal Spring

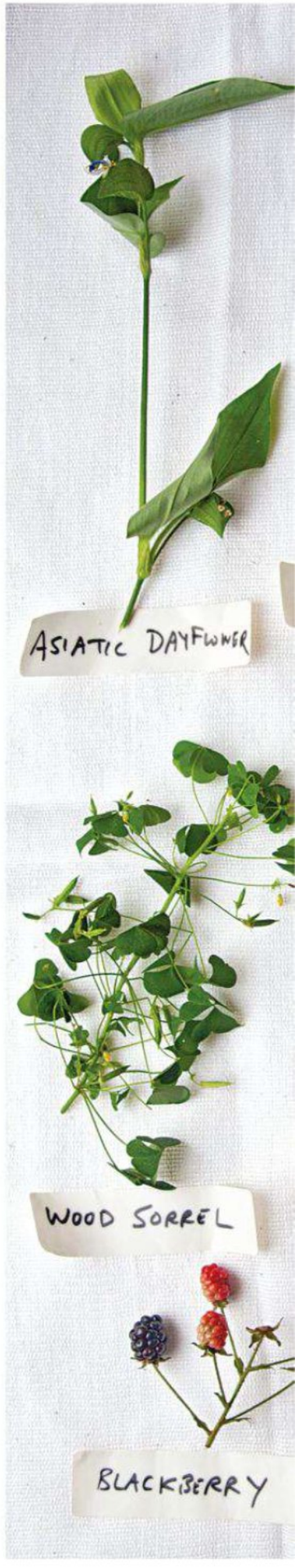
What comforts us might be found right beneath our feet

THE FIRST foraged food I ever ate was wild garlic. The allium grew at random in the courtyard of my mother's apartment building in Flushing, Queens, and as a kid, I used to pull the plant out of the ground and eat it raw; it reminded me of the scallions my Chinese grandmother used so liberally in her cooking.

Years later, when I was an adult and already living in Brooklyn, New York, I started foraging again after a breakup with a longtime boyfriend, using books like Euell Gibbons' *Stalking the Wild Asparagus* (Alan C. Hood and Company, 2005) as my guide. I got hooked when I discovered that wild mushrooms, berries, and weeds were growing all around me, in the parks near my apartment or even on the street, springing up through the cracks in the sidewalk. With my eye on the underbrush and my hands in the dirt, I eased myself out of the pain of lost love and got in touch with the senses of renewal and growth.

Ever since, I have marveled each spring as New York City—in a seasonal process that unfolds, improbably, in urban areas everywhere—transforms into a luscious salad. A sprig of wild epazote, that can turn mashed avocado into the best guacamole ever, dips in the wind, growing in a tree pit. A bitter-tasting dandelion, delicious baked in a tart with ricotta, thrives on the edge of a basketball court. Young shoots of Japanese knotweed invade yards; I transform them, with plenty of butter and sugar, into a rhubarb-like pie, or add them straight to a tangy salsa verde. While I am cautious about what I'll eat and carefully inspect where it's growing, it is life-affirming to know that even among the concrete and steel, nature provides a wealth of edible greens beneath our feet.

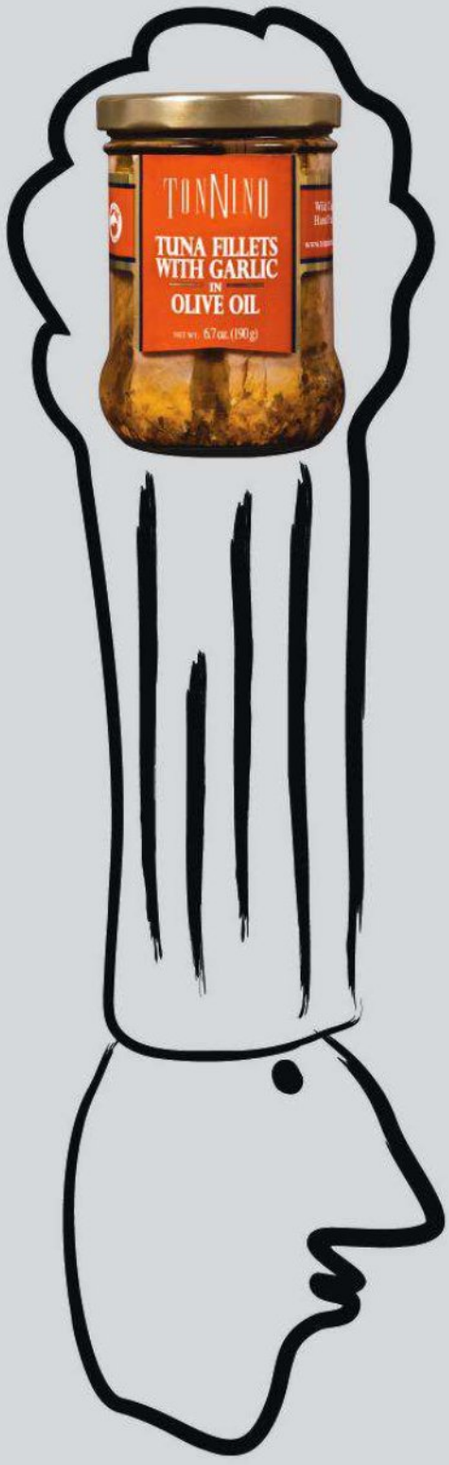
Last summer, I was rummaging in Brooklyn's Prospect Park for new finds (some of which are pictured, right) when my grandmother was rushed to the emergency room. A sprightly 92-year-old, she had recently transformed into an exhausted soul unable to walk. When she died a few days later, I did what I have learned by now to do when I am grieving; I went foraging. I took a slow, searching walk in the park, and when I reached a clearing I had visited numerous times before, I noticed a black thing the size of a dime drop from a tangle of bush to the ground. Looking closer, I saw dozens of blackberries under a canopy of arching stems and fingerlike leaves; their thorns caught on my shirt. I began picking. They were small, tart, and sweet—more petite and flavorful than the berries I buy at the supermarket. I stood there, navigating the bristly obstacle course of stems and leaves, gathering more of the delicious fruit. I didn't even mind my fingers' being pierced. —*Ava Chin*



Foragers find wild edibles in urban areas all over the world. At right, a few specimens the author harvested in New York City. Top row, from left: Asiatic dayflower, which tastes like spinach when sautéed; mild-tasting lady's thumb, good in salad; poor man's pepper has a horseradish-like kick; lamb's-quarters is similar in flavor to its cousin, spinach. Second row, from left: Lemony wood sorrel is best served raw in salad; garlic mustard seeds add piquancy to baked goods; violet leaves are peppery; red clover makes a sweet-tasting tea. Third row, from left: small, tart blackberries; succulent purslane, prized in Indian and Middle Eastern cooking; spicy hedge mustard, good in a salad when young; reishi mushroom, used in a bitter, healthful tea.

TODD COLEMAN

Tempting your taste



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» water content, which was lighter in weight and cheaper to ship. The condensed soup proved so successful that, in 1922, the corporation changed its name to Campbell's Soup Company.

15
WHITETOP MOUNTAIN RAMP FESTIVAL
Whitetop, Virginia

In the shadow of Virginia's two tallest peaks, this festival celebrates ramps, those pungent, wild leeks native to the eastern U.S. For the brave, there's a ramp-eating contest (the record is 71 ramps in three minutes), and for everyone else, a barbecued chicken dinner, complete with fried ramps and potatoes. Bluegrass music and crafts round out the party. Information: virginia.org

20–22
TOLEDO CACAO FEST
Punta Gorda, Belize

In honor of *Ek Chuah*, the Mayan god of merchants and cacao, this fest celebrates the chocolate-making tradition of Belize's Toledo district. Chocoholics take over the coastal town of Punta Gorda to feast on confections like chocolate-covered mangoes and savory dishes such as sausage with a spicy mole. Information: toledochocolate.com

21
SONOMA COUNTY FREESTONE FERMENTATION FESTIVAL
Freestone, California

This wine country town bubbles with excitement over the third-annual appreciation of the delicious things yeast and bacteria do to food. Locally made cheeses, pickles, sauerkraut, miso, kombucha, bread, and more feed the crowds that come for hands-on classes and presentations on the science and practice of fermentation. Information: freestonefermentationfestival.com

24
Anniversary:
FOOD NOT BOMBS
1980, Seabrook, New Hampshire

After protesters occupied a New Hampshire marsh to protest the planned Seabrook Station Nuclear Power Plant, in 1980, student Brian Feigenbaum was arrested for allegedly assaulting an officer. To fund his defense, activists masquerading as generals raising money to buy a B-1 bomber set up a bake sale in Harvard Square. Today, Food Not Bombs stages outdoor soup kitchens worldwide to promote antiwar, anti-poverty, and pro-environment issues.

Country Flavor

A legendary music hall feeds the stomach and the soul

IT'S NINE O'CLOCK in the morning in Hiltons, Virginia, and Rita Forrester is stirring a pot of soup beans. A simple marriage of pinto beans, water, and vegetable oil, this Appalachian dish has seen families through winters for as long as anyone can remember. But today, Rita is cooking for the people on their way to Hiltons to listen to the music of her grandparents A.P. and Sara Carter.

In 1927, A.P. Carter, his wife, Sara, and Sara's cousin Maybelle (the mother of Johnny Cash's wife June) made the 20-mile trek from their Hiltons home to Bristol, Tennessee, to record a few songs. The resulting *Bristol Sessions* catapulted country music into the American canon. In 1974, A.P. and Sara's middle child, Janette, fulfilled her father's dying wish to keep the music of the Carter Family (pictured above, in 1941) alive by establishing the Carter Family Fold, a small concert hall in Hiltons. When Janette passed away, in 2006, her daughter, Rita, stepped in to run the place.

The Carter Family Fold is convenient to nowhere, but every Saturday night, hundreds of fans travel here to listen to music, cut a rug, and eat some supper. There's a lot of food to be made: gallons of those hearty soup beans, trays of corn bread muffins, dozens of egg salad sandwiches. Two of Rita's aunts arrive early to help cook. At 8 A.M., Nancy Carter boils eggs for the salad; Mary Hartsock works on chili for the hot dogs. Later, friends of the Fold prepare dessert. Chickie Renfro makes homemade coconut and lemon pound cakes. All the recipes they cook—Janette's, Rita's, Chickie's—are inspired by *Recipes From Carter Country* (Cookbook Publishers Inc., 1997).

"I help in the concession until the music starts. When the music starts, I'm gone," says Renfro, who brings her dancing shoes each weekend. It's almost eleven o'clock, and Chickie drags me out in front of the stage. The concession stand has sold out of food, the band is still playing, and it's time to dance, to come into the fold. —*Amy Evans Streeter*

5 to Try

Eat With Your Eyes

Five great museums devoted to food

1 Agropolis Museum, Montpellier, France *(museum.agropolis.fr)* Leave it to the French to create a museum devoted to not one food, but all of them. Multimedia exhibits at this center dedicated to global foodways highlight culinary rituals (tea ceremonies, pasta making), food production, and global distribution.

2 Museum der Brotkultur, Ulm, Germany *(museum-brotkultur.de)* Dedicated to the 6,000-year history of bread, this museum houses more than 18,000 artifacts, from rustic millstones to fancy silver bread baskets, plus loaf-focused artwork by Dalí, Brueghel, and others.

3 Museo del Prosciutto di Parma, Langhirano, Italy (museidelcibo.it) Housed on the site of an ancient meat market, this museum examines the evolution of Parma's famed cured pork leg since Roman times. A visit ends with a tasting of local foods and wines.

4 Pulmuone Kimchi Museum, Seoul, Korea *(kimchimuseum.co.kr)* Learn about Korea's staple food in all its many forms at this museum (above). Try a kimchi-making class, and sample varieties of the fermented pickle in the tasting room.

5 Southern Food and Beverage Museum, New Orleans, Louisiana *(southernfood.org)* The European, African, and Caribbean roots of Southern cuisine are highlighted here, along with topics like the relationship between the Gulf of Mexico's oil industry and fisheries, and a celebration of the re-legalized spirit absinthe. —*Jen Polachek*

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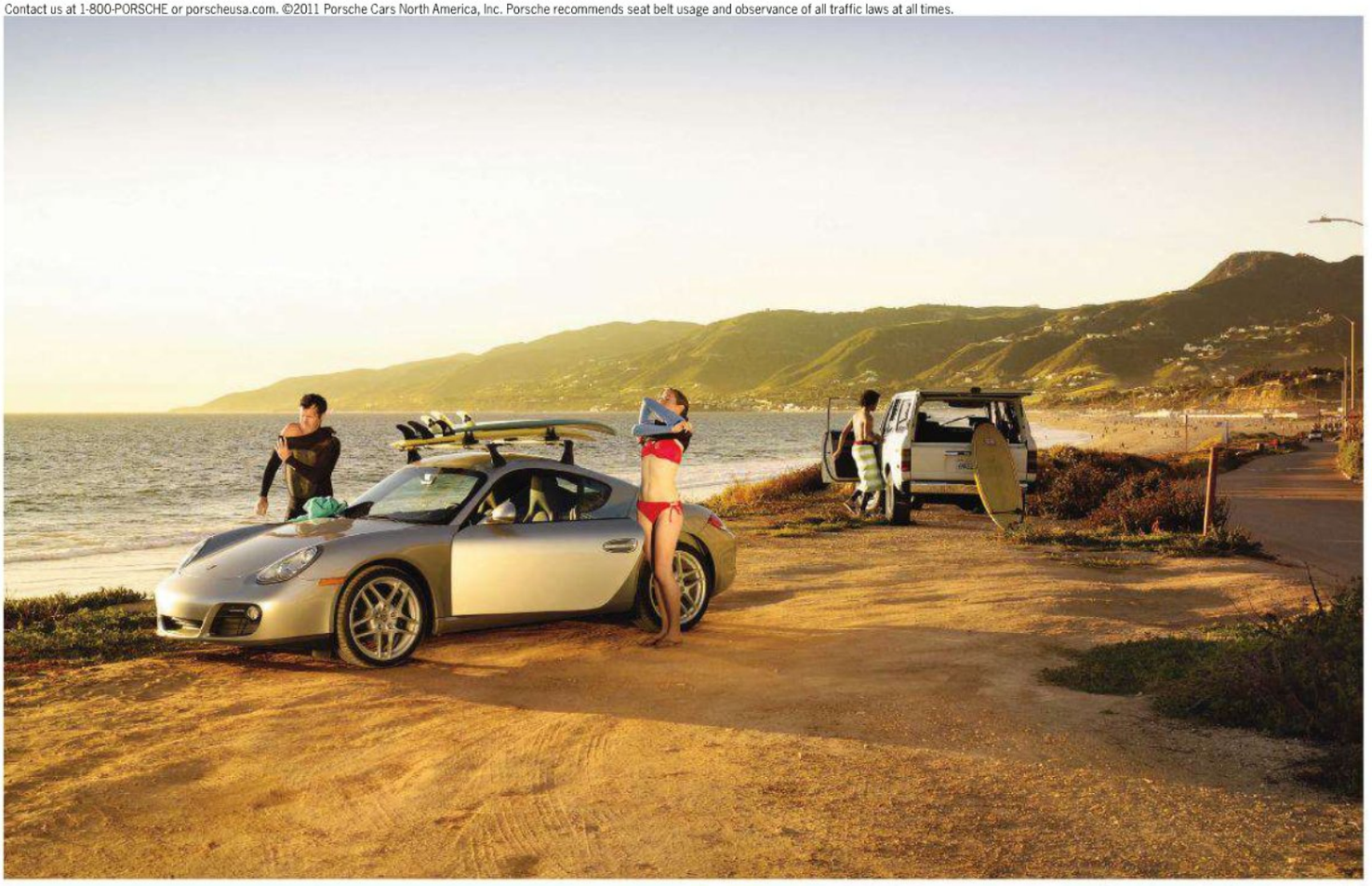

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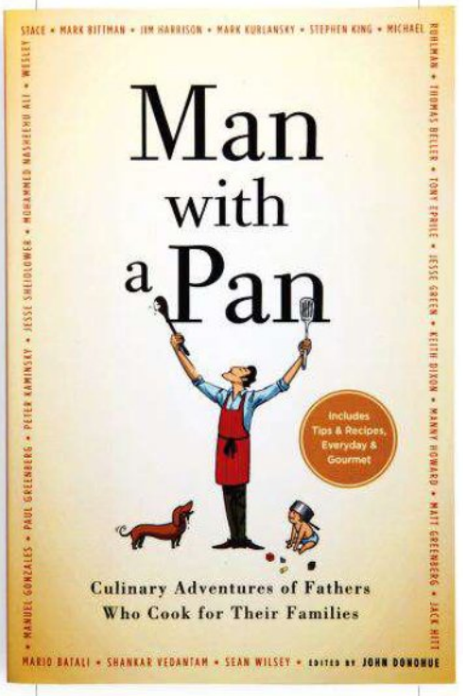
Book Review

Macho Meals

A new book of essays stars the male home cook

My father, a history professor, went on sabbatical in 1988 and, with my mother at work, embarked on what Mom dubbed "some grand effort to cook." Dad was not a natural in the kitchen, but he worked hard, and three of his dishes earned lasting places in my sense memory: an elaborate Indian curry; a sausage-heavy lasagne, best eaten cold the next morning; and chicken breasts stuffed with herbed goat cheese. Even now, I drool thinking of them.

These days, Dad rarely cooks, but his efforts two decades ago put him ahead of the curve: Today, with nearly 70 percent of mothers working, more men than ever are cooking—and not grudgingly, but willingly, enthusiastically, even obsessively. That's the gist of *Man With a Pan* (Algonquin Books, $15.95), an anthology of, as the subtitle puts it, "Culinary Adventures of Fathers Who Cook for Their Families." Edited by John Donohue, a cartoonist and editor at *The New Yorker*, the book features renowned writers such as Mark Bittman and Stephen King, celebrities (chef Mario Batali, screenwriter Matt Greenberg), and interviews with regular fathers who happen to cook.



The newness of this phenomenon is what will captivate most readers. As *Washington Post* reporter Shankar Vedantam writes in his contribution, "Stories about men who cook are novel to us in ways that stories about women who cook are not." True—but that doesn't convey the inherent humor of the situation. Men, after all, can be relied upon to overreach and, hilariously, to fail. Author Manny Howard, for instance, tries to pit-roast a pig and produces "a wrinkly abomination," while journalist Jack Hitt, unmanned by his inability to fry celery leaves, cries out, "What the—?" Perhaps out of a sense of compassion for such snafus, many of the recipes eschew formality. Michael Ruhlman's roast chicken instructions include "Have sex with your partner," confirming that, as evolved as these guys are, they're still guys.

To guys like me, however, *Man With a Pan* feels not so much groundbreaking as familiar. I grew up eating well, took home ec in junior high, and entered college a year before the Food Network launched, in 1993. Learning to cook—for myself and, now, for my wife and daughter—was foreordained. That only heightens the pleasure of reading outliers like Ghanaian-born novelist Mohammed Naseehu Ali, whose father turned to cooking after one of his three wives tried to cast spells on his meals. Or novelist Jim Harrison, whose hunter's bravado ("I love ruffed grouse") is offset by his tender memories of eating 15-cent herring sandwiches in Times Square.

Throughout the book, what comes across strongest is the authors' love for the joy of providing for their families in a newly satisfying way. Mario Batali explains it perfectly: "The best reason to cook, besides its being delicious and good for you, is that it will automatically make you look good. You'll look like a hero every day." It's a wonder, in fact, that we let women in the kitchen at all. —*Matt Gross*

The Pantry, *page 95: For info on visiting I-Scream, Manor Restaurant, and the Carter Fold, and on buying American Fruits spirits.*

Quick Fish Filets in Tomato Sauce

Serves 4

This recipe from economist Nicola Ceteorelli is included in *Man With a Pan* (Algonquin, 2011).

- **2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- **4 4-oz. skin-on fish filets, such as bass or snapper**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced lengthwise**
- **1½ lb. cherry tomatoes**
- **2 tbsp. finely chopped parsley**

Heat oil in a 12" nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Season fish with salt and pepper and add to skillet, skin side down. Cook until skin is browned and crisp, about 4 minutes. Remove from skillet; set aside. Add onions to pan; season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring, until soft, about 4 minutes. Add tomatoes, cover with lid, and cook until soft and releasing their juices, about 8 minutes. Add fish, skin side up, and cook until done, 3–4 minutes. Sprinkle with parsley before serving.

Fruits of Their Labor Growing up, Jason Grizzanti and his friend Jeremy Kidde spent weekends on the Warwick, New York, farm co-owned by Grizzanti's father, who had replanted a decrepit orchard with 30 varieties of apples and pears to make sparkling hard cider. In 2002, recognizing that their stellar fruit matched any used by French distillers for Calvados or poire William, Jason and Jeremy took the farm in a new direction. With the first distiller's license issued in the Hudson Valley since Prohibition, they began making spirits from their own and other New York State fruits. With its brisk apple flavors and hints of caramel and butterscotch, **American Fruits Bourbon Barrel Aged Apple Liqueur**, an apple brandy–fortified, fermented cider, is made for an after-dinner snifter, but it can also spike a chutney or a braise. The **Bartlett Pear Liqueur**—fresh Bartletts distilled into pear eau-de-vie—tastes like ripe fruit drizzled with honey. Try it chilled or spooned over poached pears. I like the sweet-meets-tart **Sour Cherry Cordial** served neat, but it also betters vermouth in a Manhattan. Most interesting of all is the **Black Currant Cordial**. For years, it was illegal to grow black currants in New York because loggers were concerned that the bushes were passing disease to their white pine trees. In 2003, when the law was struck, a farmer approached the distillers with his berries; the result tastes as rich and fresh as the best French cassis. Pour it over ice cream, make a glaze for duck, or add it to a gin sour for an old-timey bramble cocktail. (All spirits $15 for 375 ml.) —*Betsy Andrews*

TODD COLEMAN (6)

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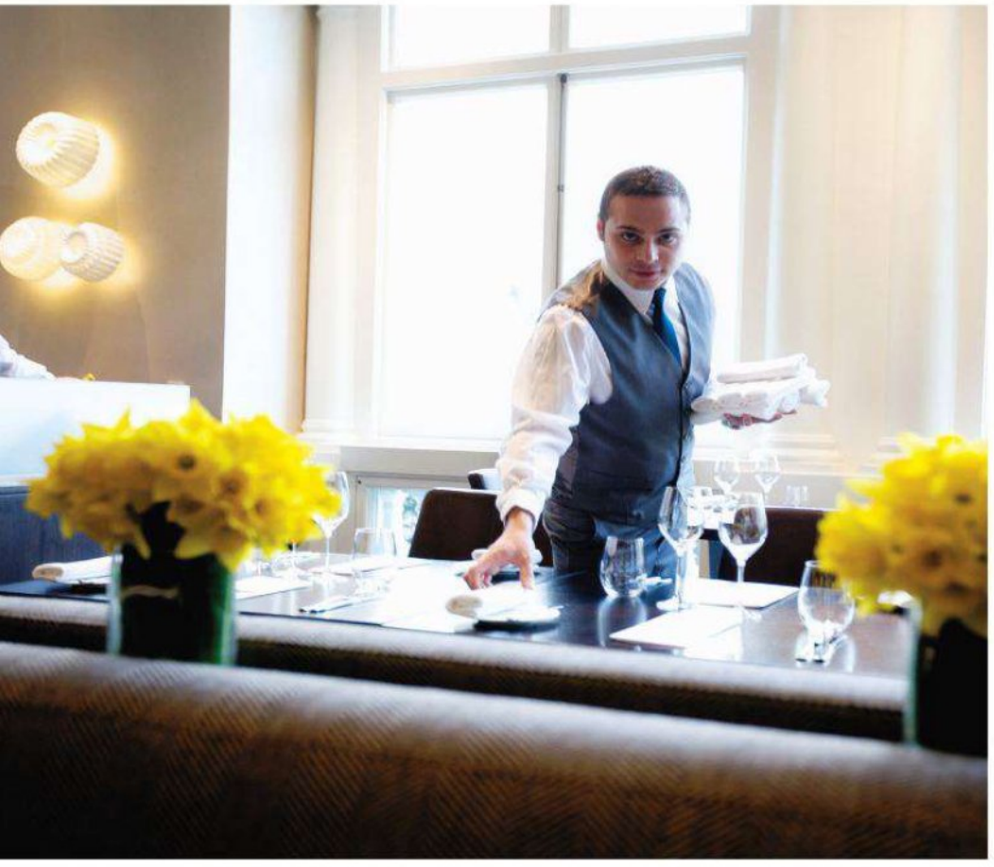

HELEN ATKINSON/SIPA PRESS

From left: the dining room at London's Dinner by Heston Blumenthal; Meat Fruit, Rice & Flesh, and Tipsy Cake

Hooked on Classics

Heston Blumenthal's new restaurant in London is a brilliant throwback

BY JAY RAYNER

In 1995, when Heston Blumenthal first opened his now three Michelin–starred restaurant, the Fat Duck, in the village of Bray, just west of London, it was very much a summer stock, let's-put-on-a-show-in-the-barn affair. The bathroom was outside. The old pub's bar still ran straight down the middle of the room. Without a supplier network, Blumenthal sourced ingredients from supermarkets.

In comparison, Dinner by Heston Blumenthal—which opened at the end of January at London's Mandarin Oriental hotel, in glossy Knightsbridge—is a big-ticket Broadway production. There is a shiny, glass-walled cube of an open kitchen and a panoramic view of the verdant fields of Hyde Park. There is wood, and there is leather. The self-taught chef has been coy about just how much his backers have invested in the venture, which draws its inspiration from historical British cookery. The figure is rumored to be a little north of $8 million, much as Chicago is a little north of New Orleans. Just the precise action of the rotisserie, manufactured by a Swiss watchmaker for the roasting of pineapples, cost more than $100,000. There are 130 seats, compared with a mere 45 covers at the Fat Duck, and 45 cooks to feed them.

For Blumenthal, who often has been referred to as the Willy Wonka of British gastronomy on account of his modernist dishes—like crab ice cream and green tea palate cleansers cooked in bubbling liquid nitrogen—this buzzy brasserie represents a step change in his business. By entrusting the kitchen to the 33-year-old Ashley Palmer-Watts, a close collaborator and onetime head chef at the Fat Duck, Blumenthal is making it clear that he knows what's at stake. Dinner is less son of Fat Duck—no chubby duckling, this—than an expression of Blumenthal's notoriously obsessive working method. It presents those who either can't get into or can't afford the original restaurant with a chance to engage with Blumenthal's agenda.

That, for the most part, it succeeds is due to his attention to detail. The one dish that will come to represent the venture is his Meat Fruit, a silky chicken liver parfait dressed up as a mandarin orange. Through his television shows and books, Blumenthal has loudly declared an interest in Britain's culinary heritage, pointing out that, in earlier centuries, the British ruling classes were regarded as propo-

Jay Rayner *is the restaurant critic for* The Observer *and the author of* The Man Who Ate the World *(Henry Holt and Company, 2008).*

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From left: bottles holding spices and essential oils in an apothecary cabinet that separates the kitchen from the dining room; Blumenthal's custom-made rotisserie, used for roasting pineapples

HELEN ATKINSON/SIPA PRESS (2)

nents of gastronomic adventure and whimsy. Working with food historians, he has dug up antique recipes and is using them as a jumping-off point. And so the menu comes practically footnoted. Each dish is listed with a date. Meat Fruit is "ca. 13th–15th century" and apparently recalls a time when the English gentry liked to dress up one foodstuff to look like another. It's unlikely they ever got their hands on anything this good. It is not simply that the smooth parfait is rich enough to make a cardiologist swoon: It is the perfect execution of the deep orange peel in a light gel with an equally light mandarin tang; a green ruscus leaf (inedible) is inserted just so. The dish sits on a board alongside slices of warm toast. Waiters grin as they deliver it. It is both an outrageous conceit and an encouragement to the appetite. For a while you must simply admire it, before finding the nerve to take its virtue.

Does the fact that the menu reads a little like the bibliography of a PhD thesis add to the experience? Yes, and no. Blumenthal has always liked to play with language, believing that anticipation of a dish is part of its enjoyment. His snail porridge at the Fat Duck was essentially a risotto made with oats, but the infantilizing word *porridge* was so much more intriguing in such grown-up surroundings. So when another Dinner starter is listed as Rice & Flesh, with references to 1390, it is worth raising a skeptical eyebrow. So it proves: The dish is essentially a saffron risotto, the color of a Van Gogh sunflower, mined with shreds of long-braised oxtail and dressed with dribbles of meaty, acidulated *jus*. It is an elaborated risotto Milanese, but a bloody good one.

Eventually, and perhaps inevitably, enjoyment of these intellectual games gives way to more visceral pleasures. The food is a joy for what it is, not for what it references. A plate of seared scallops with cucumber ketchup point out not just the newly mown lawn aromatics of cucumber but also the light bitterness of the peel. Indeed, it is that finely balanced use of acidity that gives a spring and lift to all the dishes. An expertly cooked filet of turbot comes with cockles, and both the bitterness of the accompanying chicory and the flash of white wine in the sauce lend a heft and sparkle the dish might otherwise not have.

Dessert brings sweet rhubarb braised in bitter Campari with a brilliant sorbet of the same, or a brown bread ice cream with salted caramel that leaves you wondering where savory ends and sweet begins. But the star is the Tipsy Cake, which, like all great divas, takes awhile to get dressed—so long, in fact, that you have to order it at the beginning of the meal. It is a light, yeasty savarin, drenched in syrup and served alongside hunks of those pineapples from the rotisserie.

In Britain, *dinner* is a word whose meaning changes depending on which part of the country and—dreaded word—class you belong to. In many places, the midday meal is dinner and the evening meal tea. The restaurant's name speaks of a stab by Blumenthal at utilitarianism. The Fat Duck may be couture; Dinner, with its $45 set lunch menu, is meant to be a little more prêt-à-porter. But this is still a serious restaurant in a serious hotel, with a serious price tag and the sort of wine list that will make those on a budget wince. And yet, for all the intense work that has gone into the food, Dinner manages something that is depressingly rare at this level in London: It does not take itself too seriously. Heston Blumenthal has indulged his nerdy fervor for research and refinement, fretted over every detail. And he has still managed to open a restaurant that is playful. That may be Dinner's greatest achievement.

DINNER BY HESTON BLUMENTHAL, *Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, 66 Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7LA, England (44/20/7201-3833). Hours: noon–2:30 p.m.; 6:30–10:30 p.m. daily. Dinner for two, including drinks and service, $360*

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Back in Style

Wines from Italy's Le Marche region are poised for popularity—again

BY BETSY ANDREWS

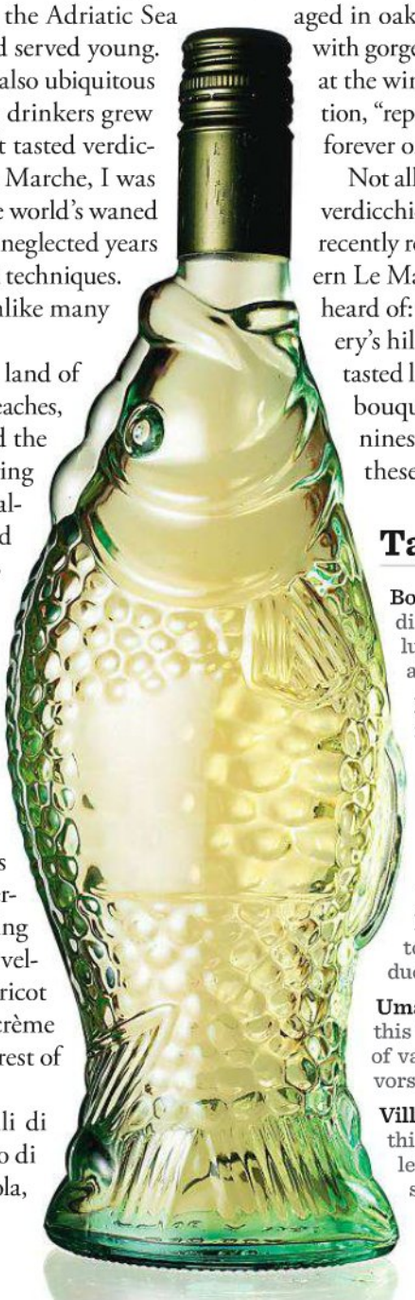
When I was growing up, my father's wine cellar contained green bottles shaped like fish. He liked to open them on summer evenings, when he'd come home with pounds of shrimp, mussels, and clams for dinner. Though the bottles looked fancy, the fresh, uncomplicated wines, made with the white Italian grape verdicchio, didn't get in the way of the seafood's flavor.

That's the way verdicchio used to be. In the 1960s and '70s, this wine from Le Marche, a region of Italy located on the Adriatic Sea east of Tuscany and Umbria, was casually made and served young. Cheap, easy, and cleverly packaged, verdicchios were also ubiquitous in stateside pizza joints and fish houses. But as wine drinkers grew sophisticated, verdicchio fell out of fashion. I hadn't tasted verdicchio since I was a teenager, so on a recent trip to Le Marche, I was eager to see what had become of it. As it happens, the world's waned interest was a blessing: Winemakers had spent those neglected years quietly improving their grape quality, equipment, and techniques. Moreover, they learned to let their wines mature; unlike many other whites, verdicchio benefits from aging.

Little known and lightly traveled, Le Marche is a land of walled villages, rolling farms, craggy hillsides, sandy beaches, and great *terroir*. My drive in from the west revealed the region's isolation: The road tunneled through the soaring Apennine Mountains, which taper off in a series of valleys that open to the Adriatic. In one of these you find the more prominent of Le Marche's two verdicchio appellations, the *denominazione di origine controllata* (D.O.C.) Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi. Here, humid ocean breezes bring roundness to the wines, and calcareous clay soil lends acidity. I stopped in at the Garofoli winery, where the luscious, single-estate verdicchio called "Podium," which spends a year in stainless steel barrels, demonstrates the grape's aging capacity. Carlo Garofoli, a member of the family winery's fourth generation, shared with me his "Podium" from 1999. Green-tinged when young (verdicchio's name derives from the Italian *verde*, meaning green), it had acquired a deep golden hue and a full, velvety feel. Its acidity had mellowed to reveal a ripe apricot flavor, mixed with a burnt sugar note, like that of crème brûlée. Garofoli recorked the bottle. "I'm taking the rest of this home," he said.

Traveling on winding roads inland from Castelli di Jesi, I came upon the lesser-known D.O.C. Verdicchio di Matelica. I stopped in to see the winemaker, Aldo Cifola, whose father, Casimiro, founded La Monacesca vineyard there in 1966. Verdicchio di Matelica's landlocked appellation on an extinct salt lake bed yields soil that's rich in potassium and calcium. The mineral-laden earth produces verdicchios that are deeper, more complex, and brasher than Castelli di Jesi's wines when young. But their acidity gives them great potential for maturation. After a slow vineyard stroll, we sampled Aldo's 2007 "Mirum" reserve. It was rich and—though it hadn't been aged in oak, like some of the other local verdicchios—smoky, with gorgeous undertones of anise and almond. "I have arrived at the wine I love," Cifola said, assessing a glass with satisfaction, "representative of myself and my idea of wine." It lingered forever on my palate.

Not all of the surprises I encountered in Le Marche involved verdicchio, however. Francesco Bellini, a biotechnologist who recently retired to his native district of Ascoli Piceno, in southern Le Marche, is growing two local white varieties I'd never heard of: pecorino and passerina. At his Domodimonti winery's hilltop guesthouse, I sipped a summery passerina that tasted like honeydew and an oak-aged pecorino with a floral bouquet while gazing out at the Adriatic and the Apennines. Like much of what I encountered in Le Marche, these wines tasted ripe for discovery.



MICHAEL KARUS

Tasting Notes Le Marche

Bonci "San Michele" 2007 ($24) Old Castelli di Jesi verdicchio vines yield butterscotch and licorice aromas, a luscious mouth-feel, and a long, dry finish of pear and a bit of peat.

Domodimonti "Déjà V" 2008 ($15) Light, brisk, and citrusy, with a touch of melony sweetness, this passerina is a terrific apéritif to pair with fresh oysters.

Garofoli "Podium" 2008 ($22) This single-vineyard Castelli di Jesi verdicchio rounds out a bright fruit-and-herb backbone with a soft, creamy body. Try it with salmon and cream-based sauces.

La Monacesca "Mirum" 2007 ($30) A lush, amber-hued wine from Matelica tasting of apricot, anise, and toasted almond. Made to age, but delicious now with duck or a nutty cheese.

Umani Ronchi "Plenio" 2007 ($35) Thirty percent of this Castelli di Jesi verdicchio is aged in oak for aromas of vanilla, pineapple, and coconut; caramelized peach flavors balanced by a mineral tang.

Villa Bucci Riserva 2006 ($47) You smell the Adriatic in this Castelli di Jesi verdicchio's spicy, saline aromas, while leathery oak notes are complemented by a bordeaux-like structure and elegance. Great with lobster and pork.

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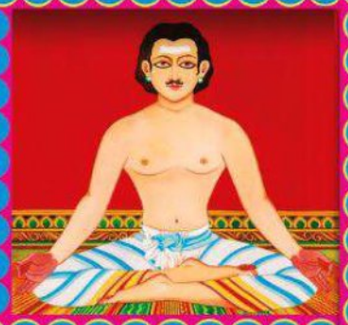

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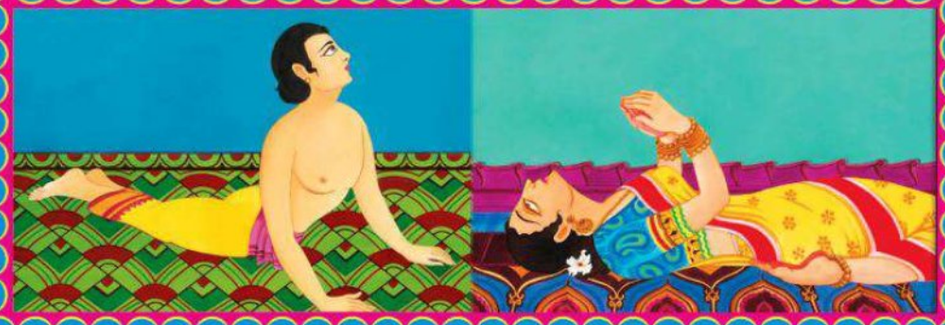
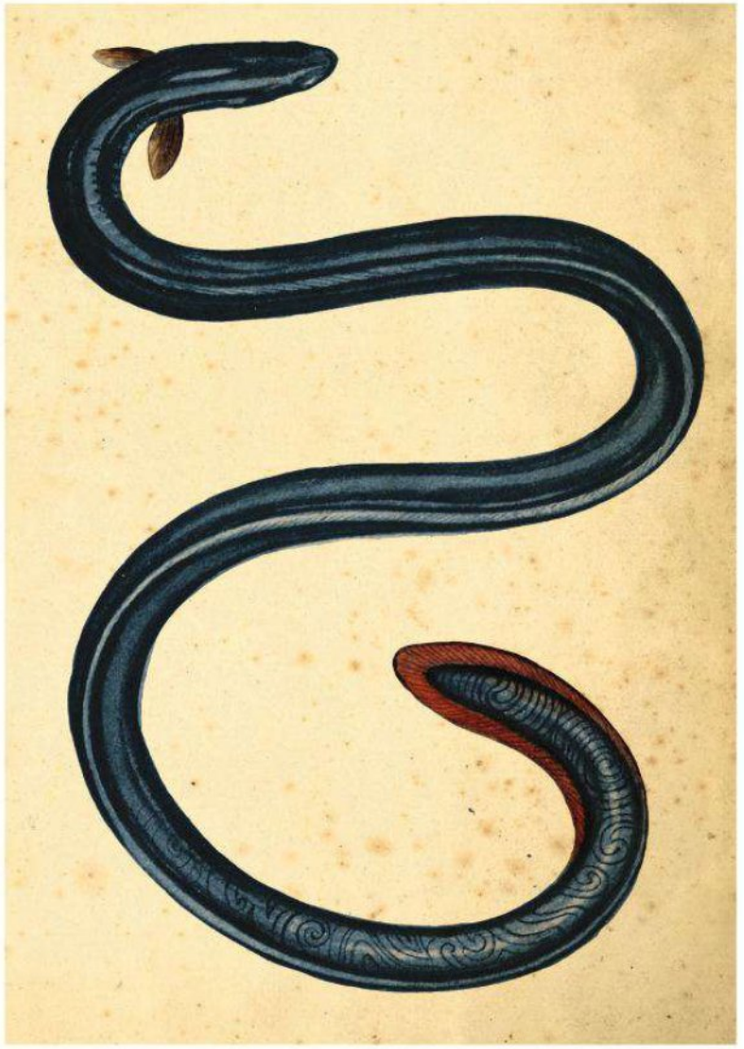


America's First Fish

Eels are a strange, wonderful, and increasingly rare wild food

STORY AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES PROSEK



When I was a teenager, sometimes on summer nights, my friend Joe Haines and I would catch eels, wading into a tidal creek where flounder and crabs scuttled over the mud and sand flats. I'd hold the bucket, and Joe would wield a tridentlike eel spear, not impaling the eels, but pinning them between the tines. The beam of my flashlight cut through the wavelets to the creek bottom, where eels would appear as if out of nowhere, mysterious and sinuous.

I grew up in Fairfield County, Connecticut, a series of New York commuter towns where most people didn't forage for their food. Joe Haines was an exception. A game warden who patrolled the land around the local reservoirs, he spent his working days outdoors and his free time hunting and fishing. I met him when he caught me, a 14-year-old trespasser, fishing illegally in the Aspetuck Reservoir, near my home. Instead of busting me, he took me under his wing. He lived mainly off what he shot, hooked, and grew in his garden.

Joe skinned the eels we caught, slicing around their heads and pulling the skin back like a sock from a foot. Then he cut the grayish blue meat into chunks, leaving the spine in the center, dusted it with garlic salt, and grilled it over charcoal. The eels' copious fat dripped into the flames, causing them to jump and char the meat. We ate each chunk like corn on the cob, chewing around the spine; the meat was dense yet delicate, with a flavor like a cross between seafood and meat. There were always more eels to eat in the fall, when migrating adult silver eels heading out to sea to spawn were caught in the screens on the intake valves in the Saugatuck Reservoir dam. Around late September, Joe would get a call from the dam workers offering him the eels. They knew no one else would want them.

How eels disperse themselves across a distance so vast is entirely a mystery

My teenage fascination with eels only grew over the years, compelling me to learn more about these fascinating and, in many respects, baffling creatures. The freshwater eel is one of the only fish that breed in the middle of an ocean but spends its adult life in rivers, lakes, and streams, a migration pattern known as catadromy. (Salmon and shad, anadromous fish, migrate in the opposite direction, from freshwater to salt water, once they've hatched.) The eels I caught as a teenager in Connecticut were spawned some 1,500 miles away in a seaweed-choked part of the Atlantic Ocean called the Sargasso Sea. Once they hatch, in the fall, tiny eel larvae shaped like willow leaves drift in ocean currents toward North America and Europe, presumably by the billions. By the time they reach the coasts, in spring, they have metamorphosed into a miniature form of their adult, snakelike shape and have entered the mouths of rivers as transparent, matchstick-size creatures called glass eels.

How these young eels then disperse themselves across a range as vast as that from Canada's St. Lawrence River to the Gulf of Mexico is entirely a mystery. Researchers have learned that only the most formidable of barriers—man-made dams, primarily—have kept eels from entering freshwater rivers, lakes, and streams. Eels can even travel over land on wet nights, absorbing oxygen through their skin;

James Prosek *is the author of* Eels: An Exploration, From New Zealand to the Sargasso, of the World's Most Mysterious Fish *(HarperCollins, 2010).*

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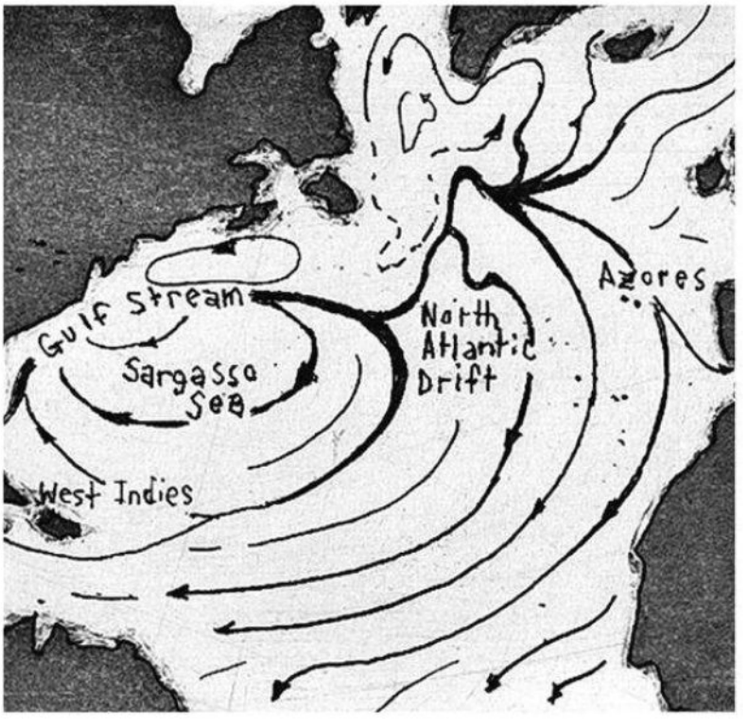
baby eels are said to be able to form braids, entwining their bodies to overcome walls and other obstacles. Once in freshwater, they feed and grow for ten to 30 years before making the return journey to their birthplace to spawn. To this day, no one has witnessed adult eels spawning in the wild; we know where they are born only because eel larvae have been netted within days of hatching out in the middle of the Sargasso. Once the adult eels have made their way downriver and into the sea, they disappear, as described by naturalist Rachel Carson, "almost from human knowledge."

Over the last century or so, eel has vanished almost as completely from the American table—incredible when you consider that it was once a North American staple, sustaining native peoples throughout the eastern coastal regions. Rich in nutrients, eels were a crucial source of sustenance for the early European colonists, too. The Pilgrims made landfall in what would become Plymouth Colony, in Massachusetts, in the winter of 1620, and by the following spring, half of them were dead from starvation and disease. Those who remained signed a peace treaty with the Wampanoag confederation of Native American tribes on March 21, 1621, and the next day, Squanto, an emissary from the Wampanoag leader, Massasoit, arrived to teach the newcomers how to forage for food. Their first lesson: how to catch eels. The fish remained a widely popular food up through the 19th century, and in Dutch, German, and Italian immigrant communities well into the 20th.

I've traveled to other parts of the world where eels are still embraced as enthusiastically as they once were here. In southern Sweden, on a crescent-shaped segment of the Baltic Sea coastline known as the Ålakust, or eel coast, I visited fishing huts where fishermen host *ålagillen*, or eel parties, in autumn. They grilled their big Baltic eel over wood until its skin crackled, smoked it and dressed it with lemon to counterbalance the meat's richness, and served it up in at least a dozen other delectable ways. In the Basque region of France, I had translucent baby eels that were plunged in hot water, sautéed in olive oil and garlic, then served scalding hot with a wooden fork, so as not to burn the tongue; they had the texture of angel hair pasta and a flavor both sweet and umami, with a hint of the sea. In Japan, where eel meat is considered a cure for *natsubate*, or the fatigue brought on by summer weather, I went to eel-only restaurants specializing in a preparation called *kabayaki*, in which an eel is cleaned, halved, and skewered with its skin on, soaked in water, then laid over a hot wood fire to steam. (Eel is never served raw because its blood contains a toxin that must be cooked in order to be neutralized.) Once the full-flavored, succulent meat is cooked, the chef glazes it with a sweet sauce of soy, mirin, and sugar, and sprinkles it with *sansho,* a relative of Sichuan pepper.

The version of kabayaki we get in sushi restaurants in the United States is a pale cousin in comparison, but that is eel as most Americans know it now—if, in fact, they know it at all. The eel we mainly eat makes a journey even more implausible than the one dictated by the fish's inborn urge to breed in the middle of the ocean. In a man-made perversion of the eel's natural migratory patterns, an eel served in a restaurant in Manhattan was most likely caught early in its life in the mouth of a river in Maine or the Basque region of Spain and France and flown live to a farm in China, where it was raised to edible size, cleaned, cooked, packaged, and shipped back across the world to New York. A vast proportion of North America's eel population is whisked off in this way, before it can commence life in freshwater, let alone mature and eventually return to the sea to spawn. Overfishing, hydropower dams that hinder migration, pollution, and possibly changes in ocean currents due to global warming have further contributed to the species' sharp decline.



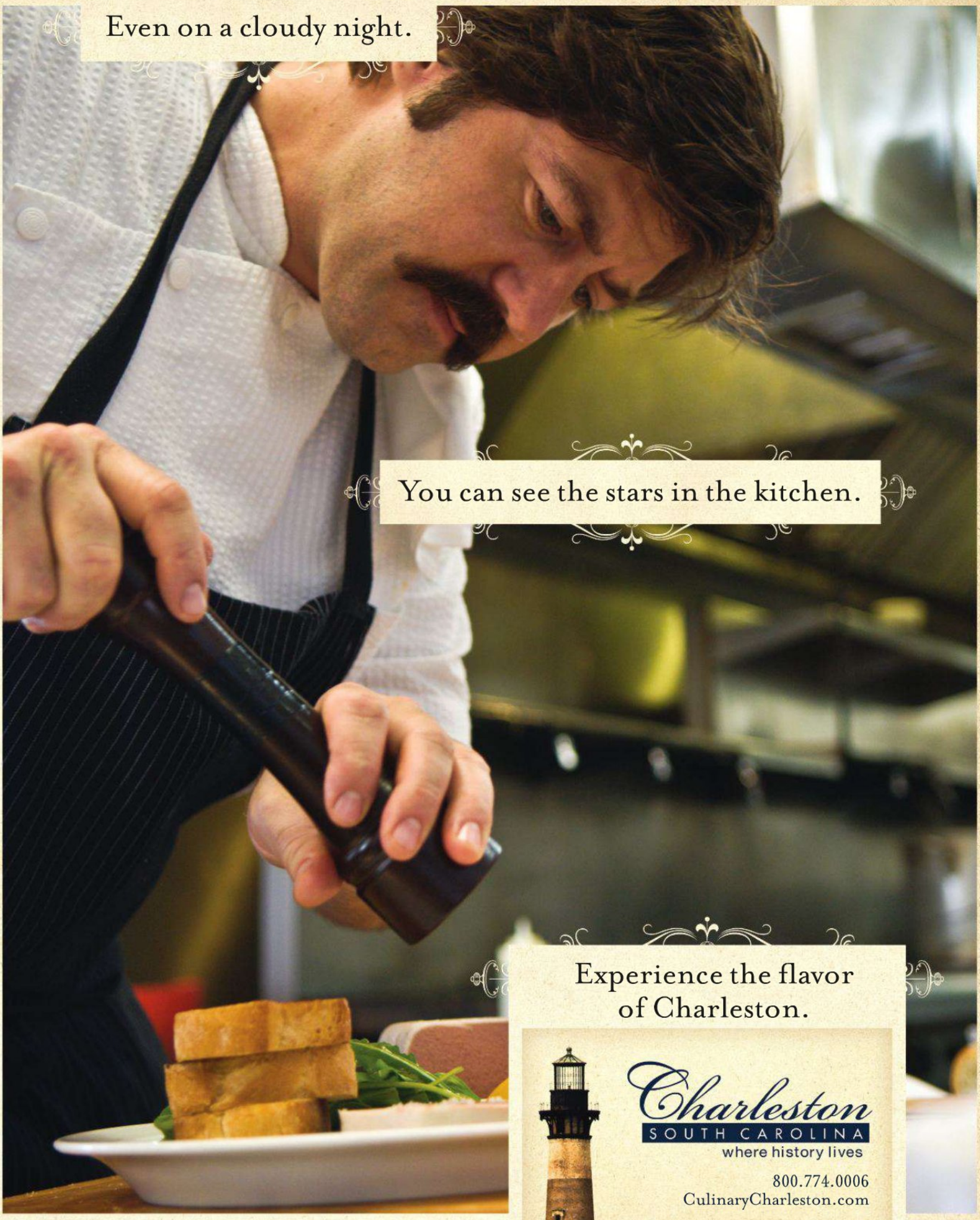
A map by the author, depicting the migratory path of eels from the Sargasso Sea, 1,000 miles east of Bermuda, to the coasts of North America and Europe

Still, eels continue to make their inexorable journey each autumn down American rivers and out to the sea, and if you know where to look, it's possible to eat eel caught locally and sustainably. The white-bearded and hermitlike Ray Turner of Hancock, New York, continues to catch eels as they've been caught for centuries at a secluded spot on the east branch of the upper Delaware River called Eel Weir Hollow. He intercepts them in a V-shaped stone enclosure, or weir, that he rebuilds himself, stone by stone, every year. Turner hauls in his entire annual catch—totaling about a ton—in just two or three autumn nights. He brines the eels in salt, brown sugar, and local honey, then he hot-smokes them. Customers include restaurants such as Dan Barber's Blue Hill at Stone Barns, in Pocantico Hills, New York, and a few retailers, as well as passersby, who find Turner's smokehouse via signs nailed to trees along the road. But Turner is always sure to keep some of his product for his own table. "I consider the eels to be the best quality protein in my line," he told me. "The other fish I smoke, trout and salmon, are farm-raised. The eels are wild."

Eel was once an American staple, from Canada's St. Lawrence River to the Gulf of Mexico

Of course, there is always the option of catching wild eels by hand and preparing them yourself, which I still do whenever I can—though I would caution that eels, and an appetite for them, are not easy things to subdue.

See The Pantry, *on page 95, for information on where to find Ray Turner's smoked eels.*



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CLASSIC

A National Obsession

Moules frites is a match made in Belgium

BY NICK MALGIERI

When I landed in Brussels last year, during a late-summer downpour, I had one goal in mind: to get myself some steaming hot mussels and crisp fries, or *moules frites*. In Belgium, steamed mussels and fried potatoes go together as naturally as fish and chips in England, and burgers and fries in the States. And if you ask me, the combination is one of the world's best comfort food pairings: the juicy, sweet, slightly briny mussels playing off the earthiness of the fries, with the occasional dip of the fries into mayonnaise providing an added note of richness.

You can find *moules frites* all over Europe, and certainly in France (where the meal is more often called *moules et frites*), but there's good reason to believe that the Belgians were the first to put the two foods together. Though the French have long laid claim to the fry, it was a Flemish manuscript, from 1781, that first cited something resembling *frites*—in this case, the potatoes that local cooks had long sliced into the shape of small fish and fried when no river fish was available during winter. Belgian farmers were some of the first in Europe to embrace the potato soon after it arrived in Europe from the New World, in the 16th century; by the 1600s, many had switched from growing wheat to raising potatoes.

Mussels are another Belgian staple. Cheap and plentiful, they were originally considered food for the poor, and they've long been paired with fried potatoes at the country's famous fry shops, known as *friteries* in French and *freetkoten* in Dutch, the language of Flemish Belgium. The number of *friteries*—and the popularity of *moules frites*—boomed after World War I, but nowadays these humble eateries are dedicated almost entirely to fried foods, as I discovered when I popped into Fritland, a popular hangout near Brussels' Bourse, or stock exchange. The *frites* were exemplary—crisp and lightly salted, and dark, just the way I like them ("bien cuit [well-done]!" shouted the young man who took my order)—but there was nary a mussel to be found in the place. It turns out that *moules frites* have migrated to fancier environs, like the city's bistros and restaurants. The meal is still a casual one, though, as groups of diners share bowls of fries and pots of mussels, using empty shells as tweezers to pluck the bivalves and ferry them to the mouth.

As I discovered on this last trip, *moules frites* is more of a genre than a single dish. Most menus offer a long list of options: *Moules natures* (simply steamed with aromatics like celery and leeks, plus a knob of butter) is the most basic and, in my opinion, the best way to appreciate the delicate flavor of the shellfish; but I can appreciate *moules à la crème* (steamed in white wine, enriched with cream), *à l'ail* (with sliced and minced garlic), *au vin blanc* (with white wine), and more. And I love the recent trend of infusing the steaming liquid with flavorful add-ins, from curry powder and the smoky chile known as *piment d'Espelette* to Pernod liquor (which adds a delicate anise perfume) and Belgian beer (for a bready, hoppy depth). Another *moules frites* rule I learned: Though *friteries* serve dozens of different sauces with their fries, flavored with everything from fresh herbs to ketchup, when you order *moules frites*, the mayonnaise is always plain.

As much as chefs experiment with classic and creative takes on the dish, the cooking technique varies little from place to place. For my order of *moules natures* at Jaloa, a trendy new bistro in the northern part of town, the chef put two pounds of mussels into a lightweight, black enamel pot. After he added some vegetable broth and a bit of butter, on went the rounded cover (which doubles as a receptacle for empty shells once the pot is brought to the table). Placing the pot on high heat, he waited a minute, then gave it a strong up-and-down shake so the mussels would cook evenly.

TODD COLEMAN

Nick Malgieri *is the author of* Bake! *(Kyle Books, 2010). His most recent* saveur *story was "Sicilian Sweets" (March 2011).*

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Clockwise, from above: at Armes de Bruxelles in Brussels, diners eating *moules frites*; a waiter serving the dish; a cook adding mussels to a pan with vegetables before steaming them

BETH ROONEY (3)

He repeated this shake several times while the mussels cooked over the course of five minutes; meanwhile, an assistant sliced yellow-fleshed potatoes and fried them in oil at a fairly low temperture until they were limp. After they were drained, the fries were dipped back into the fryer at a higher temperature, this second frying making them crisp and golden on the outside, fluffy and tender within.

As I savored the dish, I realized that it is the freshness of the mussels and the excellent quality of those potatoes—a flavorful, high-starch variety called *bintjes*—that make *moules frites* so superlative at their source. The most prized mussels in Belgium come from the Schelde, a shallow river that connects western Belgium to the Netherlands and the North Sea. Though they're in season from late summer to early spring, most chefs use farm-raised ones from Zeeland in the Netherlands, one of Europe's largest exporters of mussels. You also see *moules bouchots*, French mussels raised on rope-sheathed posts in the sea, offered on Belgian menus. They tend to be more expensive, smaller in size, and very delicate in flavor.

I had *moules frites* again for dinner at Royal Brasserie, a contemporary-looking place that serves classic Brussels dishes not far from Jaloa. This time I ordered the mussels in white wine—a *rivaner*, explained the waiter, a dry white made from crisp Müller-Thurgau grapes. The wine imparted a pleasant acidity, but this version also had tender bits of celery, onion, and leek clinging to the mussels, adding a delicate perfume and vegetal brightness. The fries were slightly thinner than others I'd tasted—a boon, I decided, since the overall increased surface area maximized crunch.

The following day, I sampled more *moules frites* around town, including a version spiked with cream at Aux Armes de Bruxelles, a classic bistro opened in 1921. And when I got home to New York, I was eager to test out what I'd learned. I bought the best ingredients I could find: sweet, plump, farm-raised mussels from Prince Edward Island, and Yukon Gold potatoes, to approximate Belgium's flavorful *bintjes*. I started with the fries first, slicing the potatoes thinner than is the fashion at most fry shops for crispier results. I whipped up a mayonnaise with fresh egg yolks and a touch of wine vinegar. While my potatoes were frying, I followed the advice of Royal Brasserie's chef, who told me that unless he was using wine or cream, he steamed his mussels with aromatic vegetables, a bit of butter, and no additional liquid. When I did the same, I noticed the liquor released from the bivalves was intensely flavorful, but there wasn't as much broth in the pan as I like, so I added a touch of white wine with the next batch. The result was so good, I decided to forgo additional flavorings; maybe next time I'd add some Pernod or curry. And then I sat down to my meal and imagined I was back in Brussels on that rainy day.

MOULES FRITES

(Steamed Mussels and Fries)

SERVES 2

This classic recipe calls for steaming the mussels in white wine, which lends acidity and creates a flavorful sauce.

- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 cup canola oil, plus more for frying
- 2 tsp. white wine vinegar
- 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- ½ tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 lb. Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cut into ¼"-thick sticks
- 2 ½ lb. mussels, debearded and scrubbed
- ⅔ cup dry white wine
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter, cubed
- 3 ribs celery, finely chopped
- 1 ½ leeks, light green and white parts, cut into ¼"-thick slices
- ½ large yellow onion, finely chopped

1 Make the mayonnaise: In a large bowl, whisk mustard and egg yolk. Whisking constantly, slowly drizzle in oil in a thin stream until it begins to emulsify; whisk in vinegar, lemon juice, salt, and pepper. Set aside.

2 Make the fries: Pour oil into a 6-qt. Dutch oven to a depth of 2", and heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 375°. Add potatoes and cook until tender, about 8 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer fries to a rack set over a rimmed baking sheet; chill.

3 Increase oil temperature to 385°. Working in batches, add chilled potatoes and cook until golden brown and crisp, about 4 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, return fries to rack; season with salt.

4 Meanwhile, make the mussels: Heat a 12", high-sided skillet over high heat. Add mussels, wine, butter, celery, leeks, and onions; season with salt and pepper, and cover skillet. Cook, occasionally shaking skillet, until all mussels are opened, about 5 minutes. Divide mussels between 2 large bowls. Serve with fries and mayonnaise.

Variations To take the flavor of moules frites in different directions, omit the wine and add one of the following ingredients to the pan with the mussels, butter, celery, leeks, and onion: 1 tablespoon blanched, minced garlic and ¾ cup heavy cream; 1 tablespoon curry powder; 1 tablespoon piment d'Espelette; 1 tbsp. Pernod; ⅔ cup wheat beer.

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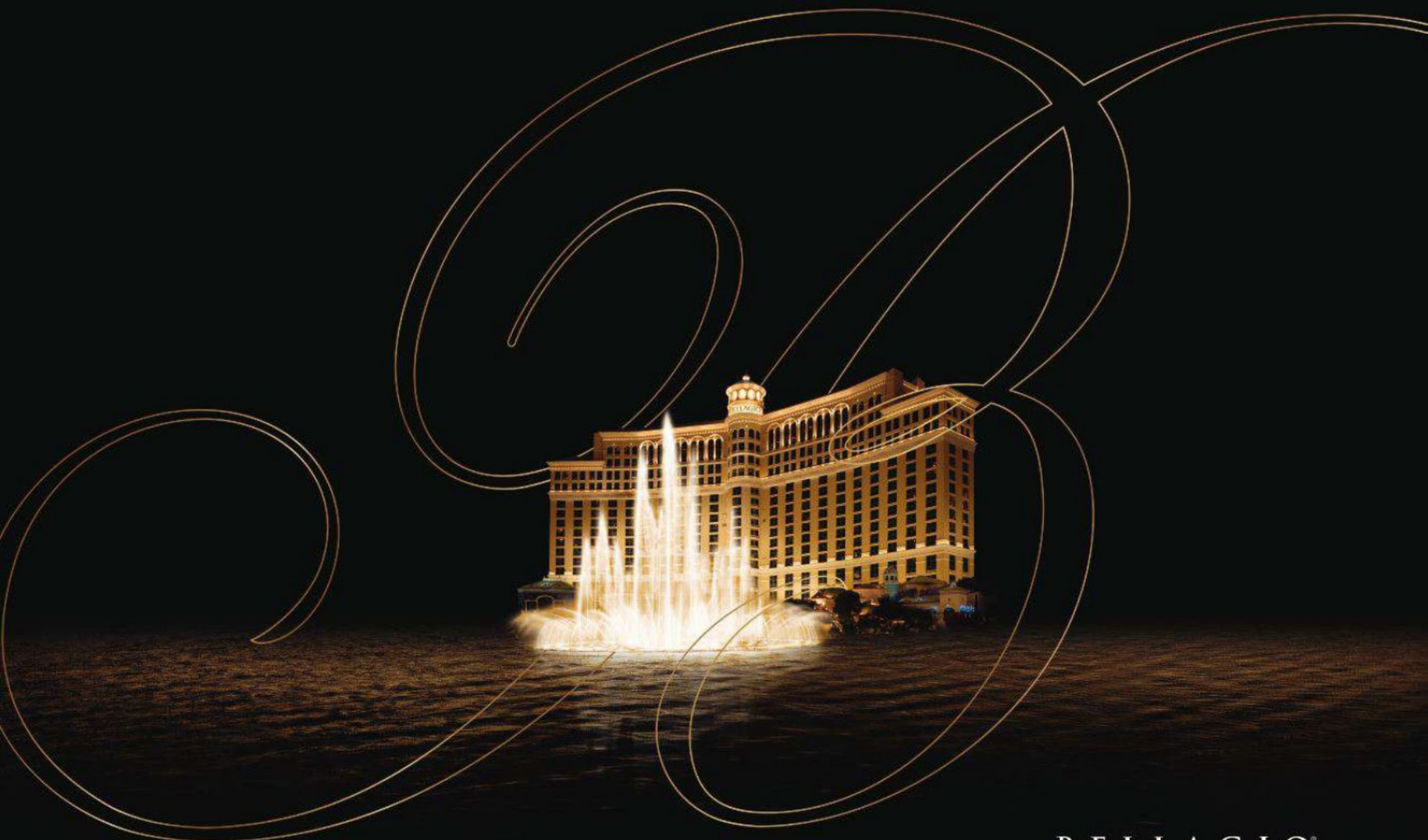

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Feel the Burn

This piri-piri sauce delivers serious heat

BY GANDA SUTHIVARAKOM

I AM A HOT SAUCE FANATIC, but I've never been lured by condiments that treat capsaicin-loading as a competitive sport. A dose should impart flavor that blooms on the palate as it smolders; it shouldn't just explode in your mouth. That's why I love Mázi's piri-piri sauce, named for an extremely hot pepper with a citrusy kick. This Portuguese-style, oil-based chile sauce has a balance of brine and heat, more unctuous than the vinegar-based Tabasco, yet less pulpy than sriracha. I use it as a marinade for chicken, dab it on fried eggs, and splash some on rice and beans. It adds a slow, bright burn without elbowing other flavors out of the way. I'd sip it by the spoonful if I could handle the sting.

This piquant elixir comes from an unlikely source. Peter Mantas, a former manager for Jon Bon Jovi, cofounder of the Asbury Music Awards, and longtime fixture of the New Jersey music and nightlife scene, and his life partner, Leslie Feingold, have been crafting batches of piri-piri sauce for the past 11 years. The condiment originated in the Portuguese colonies of Africa; Mantas first fell in love with it in Portugal, where he worked as a cook in the '90s. "It's like ketchup is in the States," he says. "You're going to find it everywhere, and every one is a little bit different." Mantas surveyed Portuguese cooks on how to make the sauce: Oil, garlic, and piri-piri pepper were all constant ingredients, but then the recipes diverged—some called for vinegar, lemon juice, or whiskey, the latter of which Mantas found he preferred for its smoky effect. Mantas makes his own using local hardneck garlic and piri-piris he grows himself and sun-dries. What makes this piri-piri stand out is the unconventional use of tomato sauce as a base, which adds a lush thickness and a fruity tang. He purees the elements and stirs each batch constantly to emulsify the oil, which gives the mixture a luxurious, creamy mouth-feel. Once the sauce has cooled, Mantas ages it in whiskey barrels for one week to intensify the oaky flavor.

New Jerseyites first sampled the sauce in 2001, when Mantas and Feingold opened a restaurant in Bradley Beach called Mázi. Mantas put *frango com piri-piri,* or Portuguese grilled chicken with piri-piri sauce, on the menu and placed a bottle of the condiment on every table. Soon, customers were asking to take the sauce home. Though the restaurant has since closed, Mázi's piri-piri sauce lives on in the kitchen of Asbury Park's Langosta Lounge. There, Mantas works as an entertainment director and maître d', Feingold as a baker, and the two continue to churn out the sauce. While piri-piri is beloved in Africa and Portugal, it's less known in the U.S. And that's okay with Mantas. "Until Heinz calls and says they want to give me their chili sauce–making equipment, we're staying little, artisanal, and handmade, producing plenty of sauce." A bottle of Mázi's piri-piri sauce costs $9.99 at sicklesmarket.com.

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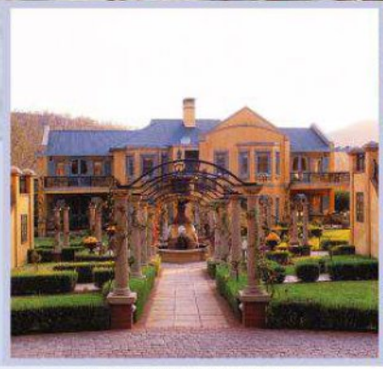

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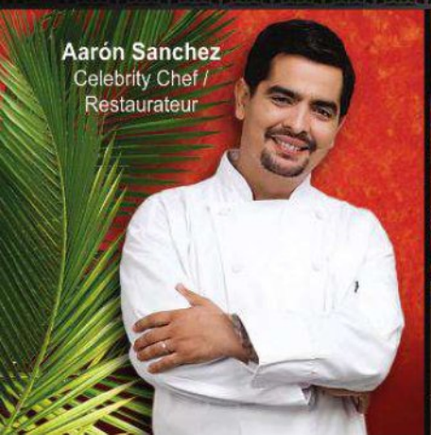

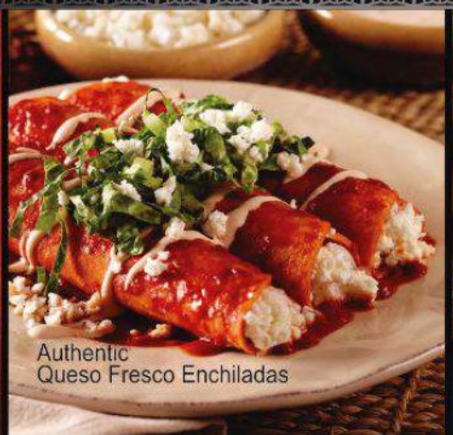

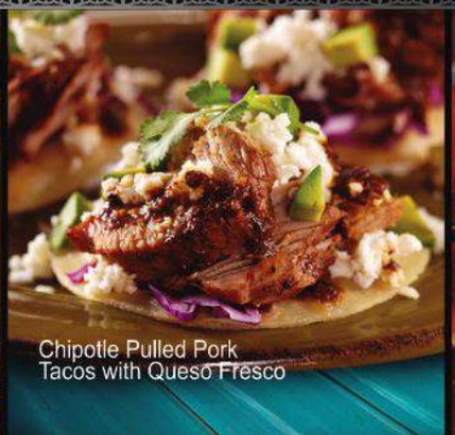

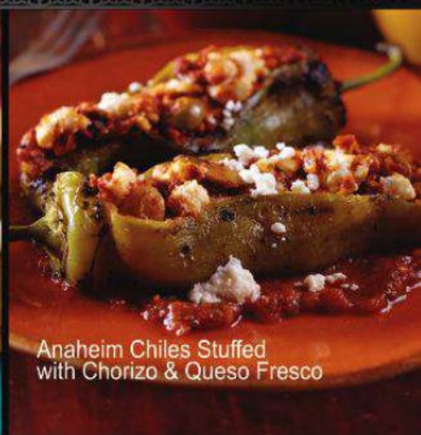

Mexico Feeds Me

In rural Zacatecas, Mexico, a young writer explores his heritage by cooking the rustic, boldly flavored dishes of the region

BY JAVIER CABRAL PHOTOGRAPHS BY TODD COLEMAN

As our airplane made its bumpy descent for landing, out the window were scrubby green fields and brown dirt roads as far as I could see. My mother and I were on an Aeromexico connecting flight, one of those tiny planes that travel to Mexico's less glamorous regions—in this case, the rural desert state of Zacatecas, which lies just north of the center of the country. Its capital is the colonial city of Zacatecas, just 15 minutes south of the airport, a place built on the wealth of the silver mines that lie beneath it. But we were headed in the opposite direction. At the age of 21, I was finally going to visit my parents' birthplace, a stretch of parched ranch land between the towns of Fresnillo and Valparaíso. I had always heard tales of the place; now, all I could think about was the food. ❧ I couldn't wait to eat an authentic *gordita Zacatecana*: a fluffy, griddled

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Stewed beans with pico de gallo (see page 53 for recipe) are shown here made with *flor de mayo* beans; facing page: a vendor griddles *gorditas* in Fresnillo; previous page: Avelina Reyes Castillo and Margarita Morales prepare *gorditas* for baking.

corn cake that puffs up and lets out a hiss of steam when it's ready to stuff with cheese, meat, or whatever vegetables are in season or on hand. If what I had heard from my family all my life was true, the real thing would be infinitely more delicious than the meat and bean *gorditas* I'd grown up eating in East LA. Finally, I would taste my Aunt Marta's famously pungent raw-milk cheeses at the source—fresh, not smuggled in and frozen. Since I was a little kid, my parents had tempted me with descriptions of the sweet *queso de tuna*—a kind of cactus fruit taffy—sold in the local street markets, and the bright orange and pink, vanilla-flavored fresh cactus fruits that grew wild around their childhood homes. Up until now, these foods had been folklore to me.

My mother immigrated to the U.S. in her cousin Ruben's red Buick back in 1961, but she's never stopped missing the *ranchito* (ranch village) of her childhood. For a long time, she went back at least once a year to visit her family and stock up on Marta's beautiful cheeses. (Our freezer at home always looked as if it were ready for World War III.) But she'd made the trip less frequently in the last decade or so. "Ya no era lo mismo," she said: It wasn't the same. Her beloved Aunt Nachita, who'd helped to raise her, had died, and in recent years, the oppressive narco-violence that's troubling other parts of Mexico had made its way down to even the smallest Zacatecan *ranchitos*.

This time around, I insisted on going with her; she insisted on going in August, just after the peak of summer, the "season of the waters," as it's known in Zacatecas. "When everything is green and abundant!" she told me in excited Spanish. As our rental car hurtled deeper into the countryside, I understood. As if by magic, the desert had erupted with life. The foothills in the distance were blanketed in grass and dotted with grazing cows. Tree-size *nopales* (prickly pear cactus) had reached Jack and the Beanstalk proportions. Some were the height of two-story houses, with thick paddles that bore at least eight fat, multicolored fruits each, vivid against the clear blue sky. In the cornfields, burly ears hung from thick stalks taller than me.

We bypassed my mom's village, La Yerbabuena, which lies about a mile off the curvy, two-lane highway, and headed for the nearby town of Fresnillo to stay with my aunt Margarita Morales. She moved out of La Yerbabuena in 2000, tired of having no running water and inconsistent electricity (though she still uses a wood fire to heat the water for her shower). It was just after noon when we arrived at her home, which was built by her husband, my Uncle Albino. Like the other houses on

Javier Cabral *is a Los Angeles–based food writer and the author of Theglutster.com.*

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At the home of Margarita Morales, the author's aunt, various family members serve themselves a supper of corn on the cob, *papas en pipián rojo* (potatoes in pumpkin seed–red chile sauce), *rebocado* (pork neck and purslane stew; see page 55 for recipe), tomato-braised green beans, *sopa de verduras* (vegetable soup), and *nopalitos* (chopped prickly pear cactus paddles sautéed with tomatoes, onions, garlic, and jalapeños).

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In San Pablo, a ranch town, neighbors of the author's cousin Chuyita Sanchez deliver hay for their horses; facing page, *guiso de flor de calabaza* (squash blossom sauté; see page 54 for recipe) at Guadalupe Rojas' home, in the village of San José de Llanates

the rocky, unpaved street, it was simple and sturdy, fortified with metal bars and concrete posts.

I'd expected an emotional welcome, complete with awkward cheek-kisses, but nobody was home when we got there: Their pickup truck had broken down on the way back from the neighboring state of Aguascalientes, where they'd gone to visit my uncle's sisters. Fortunately, my aunt had left the keys with my cousin Sandra, who lives up the road. Once she let us in, we found a big pot of spicy *menudo* (tripe stew) waiting for us and some leftover sautéed cactus in the refrigerator. These were wild *nopales*, extra sour and more tender than the cultivated ones we're able to get back in LA. Around midnight, the rest of our family finally returned. "Ya llegó…por quien lloraban [(The one) you've been crying for…has arrived]!" my aunt joked as she opened the door slowly. (Her wry sense of humor is legendary in my mom's side of the family.) Aunt Margarita decided it wasn't too late to put out a proper welcome feast for us; the centerpiece was *rebocado*, a fragrant stew of pork spine and purslane. After the rest of us had gone to bed, my mother and aunt stayed up until 4 A.M. drinking instant Nescafé, catching up, and laughing loudly.

I HAD DELIBERATELY ARRANGED FOR US to arrive just in time for Fresnillo's Sunday *tianguis*, the big, weekly street bazaar—part farmers' market, part swap meet. Bargaining skills were as good as *pesos* here, my aunt told me, and you could get anything from laundry soap to cilantro grown in the vendor's backyard to the peyote-based arthritis balm brought down from the mountains by Huichol Indians. My mother and aunt insisted on arriving no later than 9 A.M. because they didn't want their produce to be all "revoltada y manoseada [touched up and bruised]."

There were towering piles of beans for sale everywhere; I never knew there were so many varieties. There was a bean for each month, named for when the vine blossomed: rosy pink *flor de mayos,* cream-colored *flor de junios*. There were also big, buttery *patoles*, known as scarlet runner beans in the U.S.—like lima beans, but even starchier and brawnier. I

We found a pot of spicy *menudo* waiting for us and some sautéed *nopales,* tender and slightly sour wild cactus

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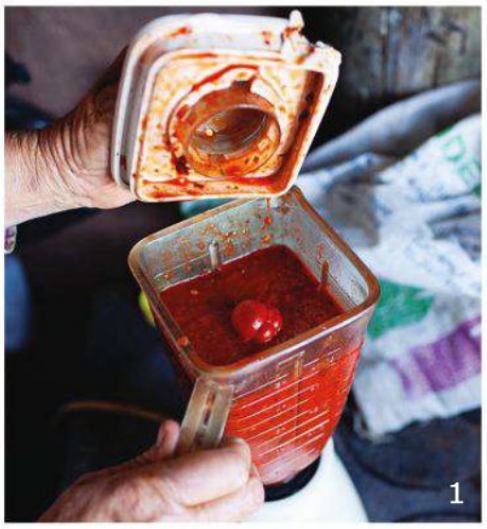

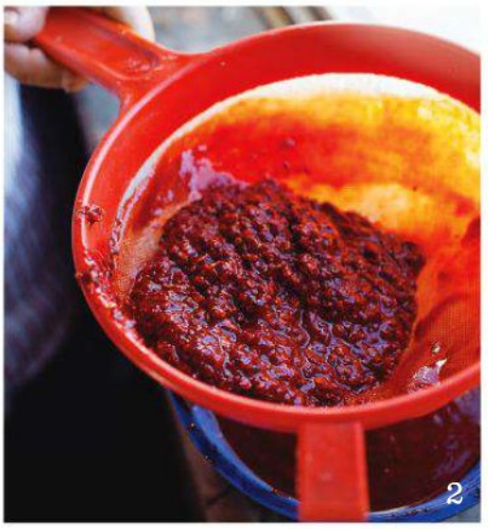

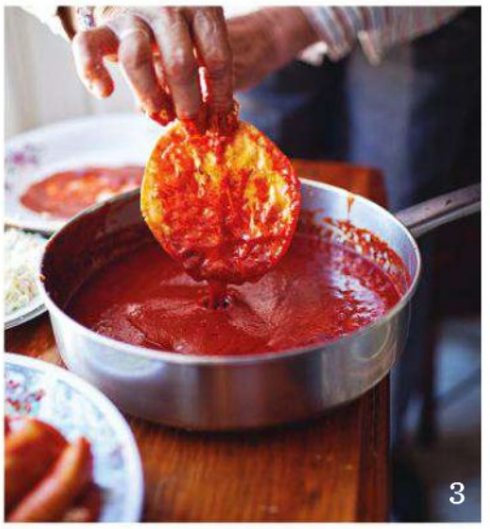

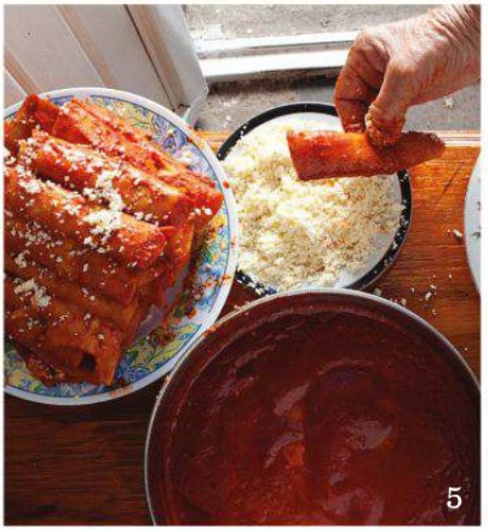

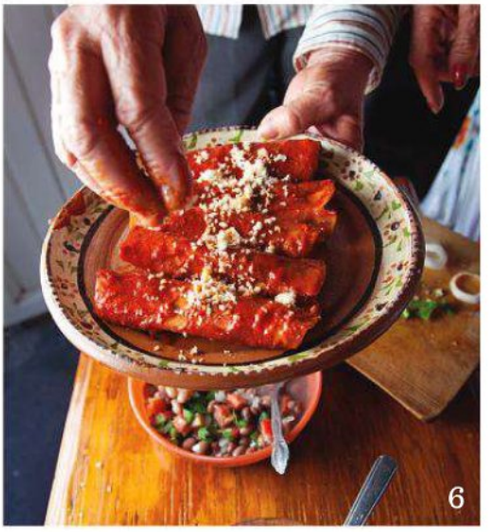

Enchilada Essentials The author's aunt Marta Rojas of La Yerbabuena, Zacatecas, walked us through her approach to enchiladas—a food whose name, translated literally, means "in chile." That's the key to enchiladas' concentrated flavor: dipping the tortillas in a thick sauce made of (in this case) dried New Mexico chiles, garlic, cinnamon, and other seasonings. Rojas also includes a little chocolate, for added richness and intensity, and pulverized saltine crackers, which give the sauce terrific body. These are spare, unfussy, northern Mexican-style enchiladas, with just a scant filling of minced onion and crumbled queso añejo, a hard and pungent aged cheese; the art lies in the making. Here's how: **1.** Rojas toasts the dried chiles to deepen their flavor; steeps them in boiling water, which not only softens the leathery chiles but also releases pectin that will give the sauce a silky texture; and then purees until smooth. **2.** Straining the sauce after blending removes any remaining solids that would get in the way of its clinging to the tortillas. **3.** The tortillas are dipped twice: first in hot oil, which makes them more pliable; then in the red chile sauce. **4.** After double-dipping each tortilla, she lays it on a plate and scatters it with just a few tablespoons of filling, so that it will roll up snugly into a narrow cigar shape, with the sauce acting as an adhesive between layers to secure the enchilada. **5.** Unlike many Americanized enchiladas, these are not baked after dipping and rolling; they're simply stacked on a serving plate after they're rolled, which leaves them lusciously moist. **6.** A simple garnish of crumbled cheese looks striking against the vivid red sauce and provides an enticing hint at what's tucked away inside. Plated with sides of beans and rice, these enchiladas are a satisfying main course, but they also make wonderful finger food. (See page 53 for recipe.)

weaved up and down the rows entranced by the cadence of the vendors' repetitive chants: "Andale! Gorditas, quesadillitas, taquitos, atolitos!" My favorite find was an *agua fresca de pulpa de coco*, the coconut drink of my dreams. A blend of coconut meat and coconut water cooled with rough shards of ice, it was lightly sweet and creamy, full of satisfying morsels of tender coconut. I bought it from a vendor who came all the way from Guadalajara, in the neighboring state of Jalisco. "Es de puro coco natural, nada de azúcar [It's pure, natural coconut, no sugar]!" he said proudly.

We bought some *gorditas de maíz crudo*—crumbly cookies made of toasted purple corn, sugar, and lard—from an old man and his son. They had a couple of wicker baskets piled high with the lavender-colored treats, which tasted like the browned edges of corn bread. A little boy walked by selling slices of *tres leches* (three milks) cake drenched in coconut milk and topped with sliced peaches. One row over, we found *camotes* (sweet potatoes) braised in huge brass pots bubbling away with molten *piloncillo* (brown sugar) syrup. In another booth, there were *elotes tatemados*, corn on the cob roasted for hours in a wood-burning clay oven. They're bought and chomped on as is, without condiments or seasonings—just the mother grain, pure and simple.

Even after all that snacking at the market, Aunt Margarita served us fava bean soup and *asado de bodas*, a rich pork and red chile stew, when we got back to her house. We quickly felt at home there, and we fell into a rhythm of setting out to visit a different family member every morning. Each day would bring a new—yet familiar—dish. At the small adobe home of my cousin Chuyita Sanchez, in the ranch town of San Pablo, I

Enchiladas in red chile sauce (see page 53 for recipe) topped with crumbled *queso añejo* (aged cheese) at the home of Marta Rojas, in the ranch village of La Yerbabuena; a small amount of Mexican chocolate brings richness and depth of flavor to the sauce.

had a tart and spicy green *mole* made with boiled tomatillos, jalapeños, and cilantro, along with a stewed young chicken that Chuyita had killed that morning. Unlike the better-known *moles* of Puebla and Oaxaca, the *moles* of Zacatecas are lighter and simpler. This one was based entirely on fresh ingredients abundant during this season, rather than the dried chiles and nuts typical of those southern Mexican *moles*.

In San José de Llanetes, a tiny ranch village surrounded by abandoned *haciendas*, we visited my 86-year-old great-uncle, Guadalupe Rojas, who had helped raise my mother after her own mother died. We dropped in and caught him by surprise. The produce truck had not yet rolled into the village, so his refrigerator was empty. He was embarrassed and offered to go to the market to buy some cheese to make quesadillas, but I suggested we make a *guiso* (sauté) with whatever he had growing in his garden. Uncle Lupe agreed, but very reluctantly: In Zacatecas, to serve your guests a meal without meat or cheese is frowned upon. Luckily, it was the peak of the squash blossom season. His garden was overflowing with the flowers, hundreds of little yellow prom dresses drooping down over broad, green leaves. We threw together a *guiso* using both the tender, fat squash cut into cubes and the delicate blossoms, along with half an onion, a shriveled jalapeño, and a few overripe tomatoes he happened to have on hand. "Oye…son buenos!" my uncle admitted. He ate at least nine tacos stuffed with the spicy vegetable sauté. Aha, I thought, this must be the side of my family where I got my fast metabolism.

Zacatecano ranch life, as my mother knew it growing up, was often vegetarian by default. She's always reminded me how lucky they were if they even had beans to eat, let alone fresh meat or dairy products. To this day, my mother eats a couple of corn tortillas smeared with a tablespoon or two of spicy salsa and calls it a meal. Cooking with a *recado*—a *sofrito*-like flavor base made by pureeing tomatoes, onions, garlic, and salt—was the best way of maximizing flavor and stretching the available vegetables, which might be as sparse as a few ears of corn or as generous as a larder full of *chayotes*, green beans, potatoes, and peas. On this trip, I finally stopped taking for granted that mindful, resourceful way of cooking, eating, and living. The day I considered myself an adult was the day my Aunt Margarita taught me to shape a real *gordita* from fresh *masa*. It was my ancestral food, and it had finally become my own.

The family member who probably demonstrates that spirit of self-sufficiency best of all is my Aunt Marta. Though not my aunt by blood, Marta was raised along with my mom by my great-uncle for a time and is definitely family. At seven years old, her aunt Carlota Cabral, a

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Arnulfo Bonillo, a neighbor of the author's aunt's in La Yerbabuena, trains a horse. Facing page: at the market in the town of Valparaíso, *tacos de papa* (potato tacos; see page 55 for recipe) garnished with cabbage, tomatoes, and *queso añejo* (aged cheese)

fourth-generation cheese maker, took Marta in as her own and instructed her in her craft.

We spent a couple of days with Aunt Marta and her sons Octavio and Juan Carlos at their beautiful home in my mom's home village, La Yerbabuena. Their house lies at the top of a rocky road, perched at the village's highest point; the courtyard, with its fig and pomegranate trees, overlooks the entire village, as well as the green foothills in the distance. They keep the cows in their *potrero*, an open range about a mile away. A decade ago, Marta's husband moved to the U.S. for diabetes treatment; now it's just Marta and the boys tending to their 30 dairy cows, four enormous pigs, and dozen or so chickens.

Aunt Marta's rich, raw *asadero* cheese is like fresh mozzarella in texture. It is made with the *leche de apoyo,* an extra-fatty reserve of milk produced by the cow to nourish her calves. We watched my cousins coax the heifer into releasing the good stuff by bringing a calf and letting it feed for a few seconds to get the *leche de apoyo* flowing. My mom eagerly accepted a shot of it still warm from the cow.

Back in the kitchen, Aunt Marta cheerfully proclaimed, "No más para ustedes [Just for you]!" as she presented us with a block of fresh cheese made earlier that morning. It sat in a pool of whey and was just firm enough to slice with a dull knife. We scooped pieces of it with toasted tortillas and ate it along with my aunt's fried potatoes in *chile rojo*. Intense and briny, it was a knockout, unlike any I'd tasted before.

Later, my aunt showed me how it's made. As soon as the boys bring in the tin buckets overflowing with warm milk, she gets to work. Typically, she adds rennet to the buckets, then cooks breakfast while the curds and whey separate; by the time she's washed the

We scooped up the briny, freshly made cheese with toasted tortillas and ate it along with fried potatoes in *chile rojo*

MAP: THE M FACTORY

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From left: The author's aunt Margarita Morales, aunt Marta Rojas, and mother, Maria Rosa Cabral, make cheese at Rojas' house in the village of La Yerbabuena. The tin bucket on the table is filled with *leche de apoyo*, an extra-creamy cow's milk used to make cheeses.

dishes, the curds are ready to be pressed. She wraps them in cloth, places them in a hollowed-out log with a drainage hole drilled in it, then sets heavy stones on top to press out some of the whey. Once the cheese is pressed, she simply salts it, if it's to be a block of fresh *asadero*; if she's making the firmer rounds, called *panelas*, she takes the pressed cheese and grinds it, salts it, and forms it into variously sized disks. The *panelas* are then coated in a red chile paste, pressed under more heavy stones, and left to age for three days at room temperature in her cheese cave, then for one day in the open air to cure and form a rind.

My aunt and cousins produce 25 cheeses daily and sell them right there at the farm to the same customers they've had for years. The day I was there, a man came over from a neighboring village and loaded 12 cheeses into the back of his truck to share with his daughters, who were visiting from the U.S. When I asked why he went out of his way to get my aunt's cheese, he said, "Pues…el sabor no hecha mentiras [Well…taste doesn't lie]."

When it came time for my mother and me to head back to the airport, instead of complaining about the heat, as I had upon arrival, I stopped to savor it and take one last breath of desert air. I hugged my relatives goodbye and kissed their cheeks, no longer with awkwardness, but with with a warm familiar feeling.

The Guide Zacatecas, Mexico

WHERE TO STAY

Emporio Zacatecas *Avenida Hidalgo 703, Zacatecas (866/936-7674; emporiohotels.com). Rates: $108 double.* Bright and spacious rooms in this Baroque hotel put you in the heart of historic Zacatecas. Fresnillo and Valparaíso are easy day trips by car.

WHERE TO EAT

Dulcería El Eden *Avenida Hidalgo 305-B, Portal De Rosales, Zacatecas.* This shop sells Zacatecan sweets like *queso de tuna* (cactus fruit taffy) and pumpkin seed *mazapán* (marzipan).

Gorditas Doña Julia *Avenida Hidalgo 409, Zacatecas (52/492/923-7955).* A local institution for Zacatecas-style *gorditas*. There are dozens of varieties for sale here, filled with everything from pinto beans and cheese to braised cactus and pork.

Mercado de Abastos *Colonia el Parque, Fresnillo; Sundays.* This is the city's biggest market, where you'll find fresh produce as well as ready-to-eat foods like *elotes tatemados* (roasted corn), tacos, quesadillas, sweets, and more.

Mercado Municipal *El Laberinto, Avenida Aldama at Arroyo de la Plata, Zacatecas; daily.* Vendors sell hearty fare like pork rib in black *mole* and *birria de borrego y chivo* (lamb and goat stew).

Valparaíso Mercado *Town center, Valparaíso; Sundays.* Try handmade *camotes* (sweet potatoes) stewed in *piloncillo* (brown sugar) and *gorditas de sal de horno* (salty baked corn cakes).

Arroz a la Mexicana

(Mexican Rice)

Serves 6–8

This vibrant rice is served with virtually every meal in Zacatecas.

- 2 cups chicken stock
- 2 ripe tomatoes, cored and chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, smashed
- ½ small yellow onion, chopped
- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- 1 cup long grain white rice
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 Place stock, tomatoes, 1 clove garlic, and onion in a blender and puree until smooth; set tomato mixture aside.

2 Heat oil in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat; add remaining garlic and rice and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden brown, about 6 minutes. Stir in tomato mixture, season with salt and pepper, and reduce heat to low. Cook, covered, until rice is tender and has absorbed all liquid, 25–30 minutes. Remove from heat and let sit, covered, for 10 minutes. Gently fluff the rice with a fork.

Asado de Bodas

(Pork in Red Chile Sauce)

Serves 8–10

This sumptuous stew (pictured on page 54) makes a satisfying supper when paired with Mexican rice, pinto beans, and tortillas.

- 8 dried New Mexico chiles, stemmed and seeded
- 2 dried Guajilo chiles, stemmed and seeded
- ½ cup almonds
- ½ cup unsalted peanuts
- ½ cup raisins
- ¼ tsp. ground cumin
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 3 cloves garlic, smashed
- 2 whole cloves
- 2 oz. Mexican chocolate, such as Ibarra, roughly chopped
- ¼ small yellow onion, chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 tbsp. canola oil
- 2 lb. boneless pork shoulder, cut into 1" chunks

1 Heat chiles in a 12" skillet over high heat and cook, turning, until lightly toasted, about 5 minutes; transfer to a blender. Return skillet to heat and add almonds and peanuts; cook, stirring often, until lightly toasted, about 3 minutes. Transfer nuts to blender, reserving skillet, and add raisins, cumin, cinnamon, garlic, cloves, chocolate, onion, and 5 cups boiling water; season with salt and pepper, and puree until smooth. Set sauce aside.

2 Heat oil in skillet over medium-high heat. Season pork with salt and pepper and, working in batches, add to skillet and cook, turning as needed, until pork is browned on all sides, about 12 minutes.

3 Stir the sauce into the pork and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally, until pork is tender, about 1 hour.

Elote

(Spiced Mexican Corn)

Serves 4

The herb epazote added to the boiling water lends a floral flavor to this corn (pictured on page 54).

- Kosher salt, to taste
- 4 ears corn, in husks
- 8 sprigs epazote (see page 95)
- ¼ cup unsalted butter, softened
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 1⅓ cups crumbled cotija cheese
- 4 tsp. ancho chile powder
- 1 lime, cut into 4 wedges

1 Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add corn and epazote, and cook (adding more water, if necessary) until corn is tender, about 1 hour. Remove from water and let the corn cool briefly.

2 Peel back husks and spread 1 tbsp. butter evenly over each ear, then brush with 2 tbsp. mayonnaise and sprinkle with ⅓ cup cheese and 1 tsp. chile powder. Serve with lime wedges.

Enchiladas

Makes 12

See page 48 for illustrated instructions on preparing these enchiladas (pictured on page 49). They aren't baked; they're simply drenched in a rich sauce made with fruity dried chiles, rolled, and eaten right away.

- 8 dried New Mexico chiles, stemmed and seeded
- 1 oz. Mexican chocolate, such as Ibarra, roughly chopped
- ½ tsp. dried oregano
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 4 saltine crackers or 2 ½ tbsp. bread crumbs
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 whole clove
- ½ cup plus 1 tbsp. canola oil
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 2 cups queso añejo, grated, plus more to garnish (see page 95)
- ½ small yellow onion, minced
- 12 corn tortillas

1 Make the red chile sauce: Heat chiles in a 12" skillet over high heat, and cook, turning as needed, until toasted, about 5 minutes; transfer chiles to a blender with chocolate, oregano, cinnamon, crackers, garlic, clove, and 1½ cups boiling water, and let sit for 5 minutes. Puree until smooth, and then pour sauce through a fine strainer into a bowl.

2 Heat 1 tbsp. oil in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat, and add chile sauce; cook, stirring often, until reduced and thickened, about 6 minutes. Season with salt and set aside.

3 To assemble the enchiladas, combine the queso añejo and onion in a small bowl and set aside. Pour oil to a depth of 2" in a 6-qt. Dutch oven and heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 350°.

4 Using tongs, grasp all the tortillas in a stack and submerge in oil, swirling in oil until slightly fried and pliable, about 15 seconds. (The surface of the tortillas should puff up in tiny pockets in several places.) Remove from oil and set aside on a plate to cool. (Alternatively, you may wrap the tortillas in a damp towel towel and briefly microwave to steam.)

5 Dip each tortilla in chile sauce until completely coated. Transfer to a plate and top with 3 tbsp. cheese filling; roll up like a cigar and sprinkle with more cheese. Serve immediately with rice and beans.

Frijoles de la Olla

(Stewed Beans With Pico de Gallo)

Serves 6–8

Leftovers from these soupy pinto beans (pictured on page 43) can be used to stuff the baked gorditas (see below right).

- 2 cups dried pinto beans
- 1 clove garlic, smashed
- 1 whole jalapeño, plus ½ stemmed, seeded, minced
- ½ small yellow onion, plus ¼ minced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ¼ cup minced cilantro
- 1 tomato, cored, seeded, and finely chopped
- Crumbled cotija cheese and flour tortillas, for serving

Bring beans, garlic, whole jalapeño, ½ whole onion, and 8 cups water to a boil in a 4-qt. saucepan over high heat; reduce heat to medium-low, season with salt and pepper, and cook, covered and stirring occasionally, until beans are just tender, about 1 hour 45 minutes. Meanwhile, make pico de gallo by stirring remaining jalapeño and onion with cilantro and tomato in a small bowl until combined. Ladle beans into serving bowls, and top with pico de gallo and cotija. Serve with warm tortillas.

Gorditas de Huevos

(Masa Cakes Stuffed With Eggs)

Serves 6

These savory *gorditas* (pictured on page 42), stuffed with chile-spiced scrambled eggs, make a great breakfast meal or afternoon snack.

- 2 cups masa harina (see page 95)
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 2 dried New Mexico chiles, stemmed and seeded
- 2 cloves garlic
- 6 eggs, lightly beaten

1 In a medium bowl, stir together masa harina, salt, and 1¼ cups water until dough forms; let sit for 5 minutes. Divide into six 2" balls (about 3 oz. each), then flatten with your hands into ¼"-thick disks. Set aside.

2 Heat chiles in a 10" skillet over high heat and cook, turning, until lightly toasted, about 3 minutes; reduce heat to medium. Transfer chiles to a blender, add garlic and ½ cup water, and puree; return to skillet; add eggs and cook, stirring often, until cooked through, about 8 minutes. Set aside.

3 Heat a 12" cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches, add disks, season with salt, and cook, turning once, until golden brown on both sides, about 4 minutes. Immediately transfer to a work surface, cut horizontally halfway through disk, and stuff with scrambled egg mixture. Serve immediately.

Gorditas Zacatecanas

(Zacatecas-Style Baked Masa Cakes)

Serves 8

Margarita Morales of Fresnillo, Zacatecas, shared the recipe for

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Clockwise from top left: *pastel de tres leches con coco* (three milks cake with coconut); *asado de bodas* (pork in red chile sauce); *sopa de habas* (fava bean soup); spiced Mexican corn; *mole verde Zacatecano* (green mole with chicken); *papas en chile rojo* (potatoes in red salsa)

these crisp, bean-filled snacks.

FOR THE BEAN FILLING:

- 2 dried New Mexico chiles, stemmed and seeded
- ¾ tsp. ground cumin
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 tbsp. canola oil
- 2 cups cooked pinto beans
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

FOR THE GORDITAS:

- 2 cups masa harina (see page 95)
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ cup vegetable shortening

1 Make the bean filling: Heat chiles in a 10" skillet over high heat and cook, turning, until lightly toasted, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a blender with cumin, garlic, and ½ cup water; puree until smooth. Heat oil in a skillet over medium heat and add chile mixture, beans, salt, and pepper; mash with a fork and cook, stirring often, until thickened but not dry, about 20 minutes. Set aside.

2 Make the gorditas: Heat oven to 400°. In a large bowl, whisk together masa harina and salt; add shortening and 1¼ cups water, and stir until dough forms. Divide into eight 2" balls (about 2½ oz. each); flatten each into a ¼"-thick disk, and place 1 heaping tbsp. bean filling in center. Wrap disk around filling, pinching edges together to seal, then transfer, seam side down, to a parchment paper–lined baking sheet. Bake until golden brown, about 30 minutes.

Guiso de Flor de Calabaza

(Squash Blossom Sauté)

Serves 4

Squash blossoms bring color and a light texture to this fresh vegetable stew (pictured on page 47). Serve it, if you like, with warm corn tortillas.

- 1 tbsp. canola oil
- ¼ small yellow onion, minced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ½ red jalapeño, stemmed, seeded, minced
- 2 calabazitas (Mexican squash), summer squash, or zucchini, halved, seeded, thinly sliced crosswise
- 1 ripe tomato, cored, minced
- 2 tbsp. minced fresh epazote (see page 95)
- 20 squash blossoms, stemmed
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion and cook, stirring, until soft, about 2 minutes. Add garlic and jalapeño and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add squash and cook, covered and stirring occasionally, until tender, about 3 minutes. Add tomato, and cook, stirring, for 5 minutes. Remove skillet from heat, and stir in epazote, squash blossoms, salt, and pepper; let cool for 5 minutes before serving.

Mole Verde Zacatecano

(Zacatecas-Style Green Mole With Chicken)

Serves 6

Lighter and simpler than the nut-enriched *moles* of Puebla and Oaxaca, this Zacatecan version (pictured above) is made with fresh tomatillos, cilantro, jalapeños, and garlic.

FOR THE CHICKEN:

- 1 3–4-lb. whole chicken, cut into 8 pieces
- ½ cup chopped cilantro stems
- 2 tbsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. whole black peppercorns

- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 1 bay leaf

FOR THE MOLE:

- 8 oz. tomatillos, peeled and chopped
- 2 jalapeños, stemmed and chopped
- ½ cup cilantro leaves
- 2 tbsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 8" flour tortillas, toasted
- 3 tbsp. canola oil

1 Cook the chicken: Place chicken, cilantro, salt, peppercorns, garlic, onion, bay leaf, and 12 cups water in a 6-qt. saucepan and bring to a boil; reduce heat to medium-low and cook, covered and stirring occasionally, until chicken is tender, about 30 minutes.

2 Remove chicken from saucepan and strain liquid through a fine strainer; reserve 4 cups, and save remaining liquid for another use. Set chicken and liquid aside.

3 Heat tomatillos and jalapeños in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium heat and cook, stirring occasionally, until darkened and thick, about 10 minutes. Transfer to a blender with cilantro, salt, garlic, tortillas, and 1 cup reserved cooking liquid; puree.

4 Heat oil in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat; add tomatillo sauce and fry, stirring constantly, until it thickens into a paste, about 5 minutes. Whisk in remaining cooking liquid and bring to a boil; reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring, until reduced and thickened, about 30 minutes.

5 Add chicken pieces and cook until heated through, about 10 minutes. Serve with Mexican rice and tortillas.

Papas en Chile Rojo

(Potatoes in Red Salsa)

Serves 6–8

Crisp-fried potatoes bathed in fresh salsa make a Mexican-style hash (pictured on facing page) that's great with eggs and tortillas for breakfast.

- ¼ cup roughly chopped cilantro
- 4 plum tomatoes, cored
- 2 red jalapeños, stemmed
- 1 clove garlic, smashed
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ½ cup canola oil
- 2 lb. Yukon Gold or red potatoes, peeled, quartered lengthwise, then cut into ½"-thick slices

1 Pulse cilantro, tomatoes, jalapeños, garlic, and 1 cup water in a food processor until lightly chunky; season with salt and pepper, and set salsa aside.

2 Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add potatoes and cook, stirring, until browned on all sides, about 20 minutes.

3 Drain all but a couple of tablespoons of oil from the skillet and return to medium-high heat. Add the salsa and 2 cups water, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally, until potatoes are tender and the salsa clings to them, about 15 minutes. Serve hot or at room temperature.

Pastel de Tres Leches con Coco

(Three Milks Cake With Coconut)

Serves 10

This velvety cake (pictured on facing page) is drenched in coconut milk and topped with poached peaches.

- Unsalted butter, for greasing pan
- 1 cup flour, plus more for pan
- 1 cup sugar
- 6 eggs
- 2 tbsp. coconut-flavored rum
- 1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 13.5-oz. can coconut milk
- 1 12-oz. can evaporated milk
- Poached peaches in syrup, cut into eighths, to garnish

1 Heat oven to 350°. Grease and flour a 9" springform pan; set aside. In the bowl of a stand mixer, beat sugar and eggs on high speed until tripled in volume, pale, and thick, about 12 minutes. Add flour and gently fold with a rubber spatula until just combined; pour batter into prepared pan and smooth top. Bake until golden brown and a toothpick inserted in the middle of the cake comes out clean, about 40 minutes. Let cool.

2 In a large pitcher, whisk together rum and condensed, coconut, and evaporated milks. Pierce cake all over with a toothpick and slowly drizzle milk mixture over top. Chill until milks are completely absorbed, about 4 hours or overnight. To serve, slice into wedges and top with a poached peach wedge.

Rebocado

(Pork Neck and Purslane Stew)

Serves 6–8

This slow-cooked stew of pork, chiles, and peppery purslane (pictured on page 44) is best eaten with warm flour tortillas.

- 2 tbsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- ½ tsp. cumin seeds
- 14 dried New Mexico chiles, stemmed
- 1 whole clove
- 1 bay leaf
- ½ stick cinnamon
- 2 lb. pork neck, cut into ¾"-thick slices by butcher
- 3 lb. purslane leaves and small stems
- Warm flour tortillas, for serving

1 Place salt, cumin, chiles, clove, bay leaf, cinnamon, and 2½ cups boiling water in a blender, and puree until smooth. Transfer to a 6-qt. saucepan with pork and 4 cups water, bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low, and cook, covered and stirring occasionally, until meat is tender, about 2 hours.

2 Add purslane and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, about another 30 minutes.

3 Divide pork and purslane among serving bowls, ladle sauce over top, and serve with tortillas.

Sopa de Habas

(Fava Bean Soup)

Serves 4

The secret to this soup (pictured on facing page) is a flavorful aromatic base of tomatoes, garlic, and onions—called a *recado*—that is pureed and fried before the beans go into the pot.

- 2 cups shelled, dried fava beans
- 1 ripe tomato, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- ½ small yellow onion, chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- ¼ tsp. crushed saffron threads
- ¼ tsp. ground cumin

1 Bring fava beans and 4 cups water to a boil in a 4-qt. saucepan over high heat; reduce heat to medium-low and cook, covered and stirring, until tender, about 40 minutes.

2 Meanwhile, make the recado: Combine tomato, garlic, onion, salt, and pepper in a blender or food processor and puree; set aside.

3 Heat oil in another 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add recado and cook, stirring constantly, until it begins to thicken, about 5 minutes.

4 Add the fava beans along with their cooking liquid, saffron, and cumi. Cook the beans, stirring occasionally, until flavors meld and beans are very tender and break up in the soup, about 10 minutes.

Tacos de Papa

(Potato Tacos)

Serves 8

These tacos (pictured on page 50) are stuffed with cumin-spiced potatoes and fried until they're crunchy.

- 1 tbsp. finely chopped cilantro
- ½ tsp. dried oregano
- ½ tsp. sugar
- 2 ripe tomatoes, cored
- 2 red jalapeños, stemmed
- 1 clove garlic, smashed, plus 2 cloves, minced
- 1 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 lb. russet potatoes, peeled
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- ½ cup canola oil
- 18 corn tortillas
- Thinly sliced green cabbage and tomatoes, and crumbled cotija cheese, for serving

1 Puree cilantro, oregano, sugar, tomatoes, jalapeños, smashed garlic, and ⅔ cup water in a blender until smooth; set salsa aside. Bring a medium saucepan of salted water to a boil, add potatoes, and cook until tender, about 25 minutes. Drain potatoes and transfer to a large bowl. Add minced garlic, butter, salt, pepper, and cumin, and mash until smooth. Set potato mixture aside.

2 Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Spread 1 heaping tbsp. potato mixture over half of each tortilla, and fold over to form a taco. Working in batches, add tacos to oil and fry, turning once, until golden brown and crisp, about 3 minutes.

3 Stuff cabbage, tomatoes, and cotija into tacos; drizzle with salsa before serving.

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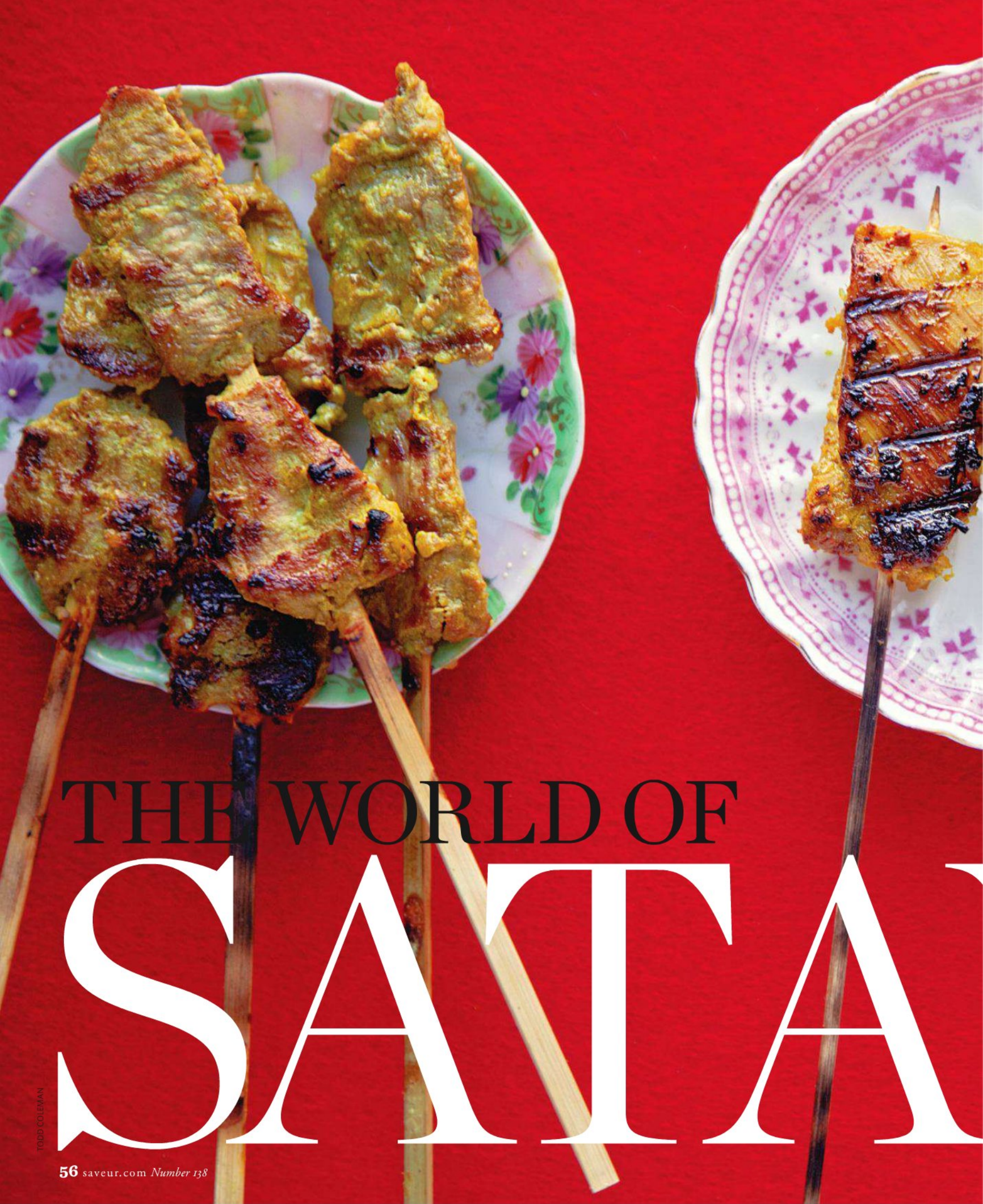

THE WORLD OF SATA

TODD COLEMAN

Y

A COOK'S GUIDE TO THE APPEALING AND ADAPTABLE COMBINATION OF SKEWERS, MEAT, AND HEAT

A Southeast Asian Craving

There's nothing more delicious than satay fresh off the grill, when the skewers of seasoned meats are hot, juicy, and infused with the flavor of smoldering charcoal. Though it's the ultimate southeast Asian snack, satay is believed to be a descendant of the kebabs that Middle Eastern merchants introduced to Java, in western Indonesia, in the eighth century. Local cooks adapted the dish to include indigenous ingredients, and in the centuries that followed, satay proliferated, resulting in countless regional variations. The ones pictured here reflect three classic styles. *Muu satay*, or pork satay, from Thailand (left), is sweet with coconut milk; what sets it apart is the pork, which you rarely find in Muslim Malaysia and Indonesia. Chicken satay (middle), called *satay ayam* in Malaysia, comes from the northeast coast of that country and is marinated in a spice market's worth of seasonings, from ginger to fennel to coriander. In western Java, satay is traditionally made with beef or goat; it's also delicious with lamb (right), called *satay kambing*: The tamarind marinade, laced with ginger, tenderizes the meat and lends it a subtle tang. —*James Oseland*

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Instant Gratification

Satay is the quintessence of fast food in southeast Asia. You'll find it sizzling over hot coals practically 24 hours a day—at night markets, in busy hawker stalls, or offered by mobile vendors who prepare it to order. These cooks carry bamboo rods across their shoulders, balancing a basketful of the marinated meat and condiments on one side and a small grill filled with hot coals on the other. When a vendor is waved down by a customer, he sets up his mobile kitchen on the ground and starts cooking. Within minutes, the skewers are charred and ready to eat. The versions offered depend on your location. In coastal areas, you find an amazing variety of seafood satays, such as the ones featured here: an emphatically spiced *hoi malaeng puu* from southern Thailand made with mussels (top) and *satay udang*, shrimp slathered with a gingery paste (bottom), a favorite in Singapore. On the island of Bali, in Indonesia, the seafood used in satay is brightly seasoned; cooks finely mince ingredients like fresh tuna (middle) with freshly pounded spices and shape them around the skewers before grilling to make *satay lilit*.

TODD COLEMAN (2)

The Spirit of Satay

Inherent in the great tradition of satay is the tendency to tweak—to take a classic recipe and make it your own. On this page are two iterations by chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten, one of the world's great interpreters of southeast Asian cuisine. His lemongrass pork satay (top) takes the typical Thai marinade flavorings of lime leaves and lemongrass and bolsters them with umami-packed ingredients like oyster sauce, fish sauce, and sesame seeds. Vongerichten's chile-rubbed beef satay (bottom) is herbaceous and vividly flavored with fresh soy sauce, cilantro, and orange zest. These capture the true spirit of satay, a genre that's open to interpretation and infinitely customizable.

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Global Styles

The impulse to grill skewered ingredients is one that cooks in many parts of the world share: from Japan, where small pieces of chicken and other ingredients are threaded onto sticks for *yakitori*, to Greece, where large, succulent chunks of lamb or pork *souvlaki* are grilled on metal skewers. In the Middle East, kebabs are often made with meat that's been minced and seasoned, as in the case of this Lebanese beef *kafta* (top). The mincing distributes dried mint, cinnamon, and other seasonings throughout each and every bite. Turkish cooks prepare shish kebab (left) by marinating cubes of lamb with cumin and other seasonings. Kebabs in India tend to be big and generously embellished: For *reshmi kebab* (bottom) ground chicken is mixed with almonds, spices like garam masala, and a touch of heavy cream, which enriches the meat and keeps it from drying out on the grill. The ground meat is pressed along the length of a metal skewer and served with flatbread and green coriander chutney.

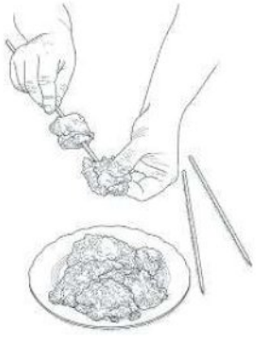
TODD COLEMAN (2)

Balancing Acts

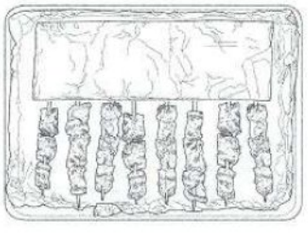
Skewers of satay are powerfully seasoned in their own right, but it's the sauces and condiments that invariably accompany them that draw everything together. The serving of satay in Indonesia and Malaysia is an elegant art form: Skewers are arranged atop a banana leaf with a dollop of spicy, rich peanut sauce (top left), called *saus kacang tanah*, and a drizzle of *sambal kecap* (bottom right), sweet, thick soy sauce spiked with chiles and shallots. In Indonesia, these sauces often come with a cool pile of *acar timun*, sweet-tart vegetable pickles (bottom left), and in Thailand with *ajad*, a refreshing cucumber salad emboldened with sliced shallots and chiles (top right). Altogether, it's a brilliant composition of flavors, temperatures, and textures.

Satay Tips

SLICING There are good reasons to slice the meat thin: It renders even chewy cuts, like beef sirloin and lamb shoulder, tender; it allows the marinade to penetrate the meat, thoroughly flavoring and tenderizing it; it creates more surface area which will become crisp and delicious when exposed to heat; and the satay will cook in just minutes. For easy slicing, place your meat in the freezer for 20 minutes to firm the flesh. Cut the meat across the grain and on a diagonal so that it's no thicker than ¼".



SKEWERING Though metal skewers can be used, wood is more common. Soak wooden skewers for 30 minutes before cooking to prevent them from burning. If the meat is sliced very thin, you can weave the skewer in and out at ½" intervals. In most cases, however, it's better to press the skewer straight through the center without breaching the surface of the meat. To do this, hold the sides of the meat tight and push the skewer 1" into the meat, then stretch the meat down the length of the skewer (above).



COOKING You can use a standard American charcoal grill or an electric one, but you'll get the tastiest results from a hibachi. With its shallow fire bed, it's the best kind of grill for satay because it places the meat as close to the fire as possible, ideally within 2"–3". The high heat ensures an appealing exterior char. Charcoal- and wood-burning fires impart the best flavor. For indoor cooking, a broiler is the best alternative. For the recipes here, you can line a baking sheet with aluminum foil and cover the exposed ends of wooden skewers with foil too, to prevent burning (above). Cook the satays no more than 3" from the broiler element to achieve that ideal combination of cooked center and charred exterior. —*Ben Mims*

ILLUSTRATIONS: BRENDA WEAVER

For hard-to-find ingredients, see The Pantry, *page 95.*

Acar Timun

(Javanese Cucumber and Carrot Pickle)

Makes about 2½ cups

This relish (pictured on page 61) is an easy-to-make version of Indonesian pickle.

- 1½ tbsp. kosher salt
- 3 shallots, thinly sliced
- 1½ cucumbers, cut into 2"-long x ¼"-wide sticks
- 1 large carrot, cut into 2"-long x ¼" wide sticks
- 2½ tbsp. sugar
- 2 tbsp. rice vinegar
- 2 green Thai chiles, sliced thin

Stir together salt, shallots, cucumbers, carrots, and 2 cups boiling water in a bowl. Let sit 15 minutes; drain. Squeeze out liquid and transfer to a bowl; stir in sugar, vinegar, and chiles. Let sit 15 minutes.

Ajad

(Thai Cucumber Relish)

Makes about 2 cups

This relish (pictured on 61) is adapted from a recipe in *Thai Street Food* (Ten Speed Press, 2010) by David Thompson.

- ¼ cup sugar
- ¼ cup distilled white vinegar
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped cilantro
- ¼ fresno chile, finely chopped
- 4 small shallots, sliced thin
- 1 small cucumber, quartered lengthwise, sliced thin

Stir sugar, vinegar, salt, and ¼ cup boiling water in a bowl; let cool. Stir in cilantro, chile, shallots, and cucumber before serving.

Chile-Rubbed Beef Satay

Makes 12 skewers

Chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten created this intensely flavorful contemporary satay (pictured on 59).

- ⅓ cup soy sauce
- ¼ cup minced fresh cilantro
- 2 tbsp. grated orange zest
- 4 tsp. fish sauce
- 1½ tsp. dark brown sugar
- 1 tsp. canola oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 lb. beef sirloin, cut into 1"-wide, ¼"-thick slices

1 Puree soy sauce, cilantro, orange zest, fish sauce, sugar, oil, and garlic in a food processor until smooth. Toss paste and beef in a bowl; chill 4 hours.

2 Build a hot charcoal fire in a grill. Thread 1 piece of beef each on 12 skewers; grill, turning, until charred, about 5 minutes.

Hoi Malaeng Puu

(Southern Thai-Style Mussel Satay)

Makes 20 skewers

This satay (pictured on 58) has a tangy fieriness, imparted by red curry paste and tamarind.

- 2 tbsp. tamarind paste
- 1½ cups coconut milk
- ⅔ cup fresh grated coconut
- ½ cup Thai red curry paste
- ½ cup minced lemongrass
- ⅓ cup dark brown sugar
- ⅓ cup thinly sliced shallots
- 2 tbsp. fish sauce
- 3 Kaffir lime leaves, stemmed, minced
- 1 pandan leaf, tied into a knot
- 2 lb. (about 60) large mussels

1 Stir together tamarind and 5 tbsp. boiling water in a bowl until dissolved; pour through strainer into a 2-qt. saucepan. Add coconut milk, coconut, curry paste, lemongrass, sugar, shallots, fish sauce, lime leaves, pandan, and 3 tbsp. water; heat over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring, until thickened, about 10 minutes. T-ransfer to a bowl and set aside.

2 Bring 1 cup water to a boil in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add mussels, cover, and cook until all mussels open, about 4 minutes. Remove from heat; let cool. Remove meat from shells and stir into marinade; chill 2 hours.

3 Build a hot charcoal fire in a grill. Thread 3 mussels each on 20 skewers; grill, turning, until charred, about 6 minutes.

Kafta

(Lebanese Beef Kebabs)

Makes 22 skewers

This *kafta* recipe (pictured on 60) is adapted from Annia Ciezadlo's *Day of Honey* (Simon & Schuster, 2011).

- 8 oz. ground beef chuck
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped parsley
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped sundried tomatoes
- 2 tbsp. Aleppo pepper
- ¼ tsp. ground allspice
- ¾ tsp. dried mint
- ½ tsp. ground cumin
- ½ tsp. ground coriander
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ½ medium yellow onion, grated, drained in a strainer
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Build a hot charcoal fire in a grill. In a large bowl, stir together beef, parsley, tomatoes, Aleppo, allspice, mint, cumin, coriander, cinnamon, onions, salt, and pepper. Form 1 tbsp. beef mixture each around the end of 22 skewers; grill, turning, until lightly charred, about 4 minutes.

Lemongrass Pork Satay

Makes 15 skewers

Jean-Georges Vongerichten uses pork shoulder for this umami-packed satay (pictured on 59).

- 3 tbsp. canola oil
- 2 tbsp. oyster sauce
- 2 tbsp. minced lemongrass
- 2 tbsp. toasted sesame seeds
- 1 tbsp. fish sauce
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 2 small shallots, minced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 5 oz. pork shoulder, cut into 1"-wide, ¼"-thick slices

1 Puree oil, oyster sauce, lemongrass, sesame, fish sauce, sugar, shallots, and garlic in a food processor until smooth. Toss paste and pork in a bowl; chill 4 hours.

2 Build a hot charcoal fire in a grill. Thread 1 piece of pork each on 15 skewers; grill, turning, until lightly charred, about 5 minutes.

Muu Satay

(Thai Pork Satay)

Makes 10 skewers

Coconut milk imbues David Thompson's pork satay (pictured on 56) with a subtle sweetness.

- 1 cup coconut milk
- 3 tbsp. chopped lemongrass
- 2 tbsp. coconut oil
- 1 tbsp. chopped galangal
- 1 tbsp. dark brown sugar
- 1½ tsp. ground turmeric
- 1½ tsp. ground coriander
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. ground cumin
- ⅛ tsp. cayenne pepper
- 12 oz. pork loin, cut into 1"-wide, ¼"-thick slices

1 Puree ½ cup coconut milk, lemongrass, oil, galangal, sugar, turmeric, coriander, salt, cumin, and cayenne in a food processor. Toss paste and pork in a bowl; chill 4 hours.

2 Build a hot charcoal fire in a grill. Pour remaining coconut milk into a bowl and stir to combine. Thread 3 slices pork each on 10 skewers, dip in coconut milk, and grill, turning, until charred, about 7 minutes.

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Reshmi Kebab

(Indian Chicken Kebab)

Makes 6 skewers

These fragrant chicken kebabs (pictured on 60) hail from North India.

- 1¼ lb. ground chicken
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped garlic
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped ginger
- 1 tbsp. hot paprika
- ¼ cup blanched almonds
- 1½ tbsp. heavy cream
- 1 tbsp. garam masala
- ¾ tsp. ground cardamom
- ¾ tsp. ground allspice
- 1 egg white, lightly beaten
- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- 1 yellow onion, minced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 In a bowl, mix chicken, garlic, ginger, and paprika; let sit 30 minutes. Place almonds in a bowl and cover with boiling water; let sit 10 minutes. Drain and puree in a food processor with cream, garam masala, cardamom, allspice, and egg white; transfer to chicken mixture. Heat oil in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium heat; add onions and cook, stirring, until deeply caramelized, about 8 minutes. Stir into chicken mixture; season with salt and pepper.

2 Build a hot charcoal fire in a grill. Divide chicken mixture into 6 portions; form each around the length of a flat metal skewer. Grill, turning, until charred, 4–5 minutes.

Sambal Kecap

(Sweet Soy Dipping Sauce)

Makes about 1 cup

- ¾ cup kecap manis (sweet soy sauce)
- 3 tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 10 red Thai chiles, sliced thin
- 4 Kaffir lime leaves, stemmed, very thinly sliced crosswise
- 3 shallots, very thinly sliced

Stir together kecap manis, lime juice, chiles, lime leaves, and shallots in a bowl; let sit 30 minutes.

Satay Ayam

(Chicken Satay)

Makes 30 skewers

This recipe (pictured on 58) is adapted from *Cradle of Flavor* (W.W. Norton, 2006) by SAVEUR editor-in-chief James Oseland.

- 6 tbsp. peanut oil
- ¼ cup dark brown sugar
- 1 tbsp. ground coriander
- 2½ tsp. ground turmeric
- 1½ tsp. ground fennel
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 6 stalks lemongrass, chopped, plus 1 stalk, whole
- 3 large shallots, chopped
- 1 5" piece ginger, chopped
- 3¼ lb. skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1"-wide, ¼"-thick slices

1 Process 2 tbsp. oil with the sugar, coriander, turmeric, fennel, salt, garlic, chopped lemongrass, shallots, and ginger in a food processor until smooth. Combine paste and chicken in a bowl; chill 4 hours. Using a meat mallet, strike thick end of lemongrass stalk until it splits into threads resembling a brush; place shattered end in a bowl and pour in remaining oil.

2 Build a hot charcoal fire in a grill. Thread 2 pieces of chicken each on 30 skewers; grill, turning once, brushing with oil from lemongrass brush, until charred, 5–6 minutes.

Satay Kambing

(Lamb Satay)

Makes 16 skewers

A sweet-and-sour marinade typifies this west Javanese-style satay (pictured on 57).

- 1 tbsp. tamarind paste
- 1 tbsp. dark brown sugar
- 2 tsp. peanut oil
- 1½ tsp. ground coriander
- 1½ tsp. ground turmeric
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 3 large shallots, chopped
- 1 2" piece ginger, chopped
- 1 lb. lamb shoulder, cut into 1"-wide, ¼"-thick slices

1 Stir tamarind and 3 tbsp. boiling water in a bowl until dissolved; pour through strainer into a food processor. Puree with sugar, oil, coriander, turmeric, salt, garlic, shallots, and ginger. Combine paste and lamb in a bowl; chill 4 hours.

2 Build a hot charcoal fire in a grill. Thread 2 pieces of lamb each on 16 skewers; grill, turning, until lightly charred, about 4 minutes.

Satay Lilit

(Balinese Tuna Satay)

Makes 30 skewers

This Balinese-style tuna satay (pictured on page 58) is adapted from Janet De Neefe's *Fragrant Rice* (Periplus Editions, 2006).

- ½ cup chopped lemongrass
- ¼ cup coconut milk
- 1½ tbsp. dark brown sugar
- 1 tbsp. chopped galangal
- 2 tsp. chopped ginger
- 1½ tsp. ground turmeric
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ tsp. ground coriander
- ¼ tsp. ground black pepper
- ⅛ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- 6 cloves garlic, chopped
- 4 Kaffir lime leaves, stemmed
- 3 red Thai chiles, stemmed
- 2 macadamia nuts
- 2 shallots, chopped
- 1 tomato, seeded, chopped
- 10 oz. skinless tuna filets, cubed

1 Process lemongrass, coconut milk, sugar, galangal, ginger, turmeric, salt, coriander, pepper, nutmeg, garlic, lime leaves, chiles, nuts, shallots, and tomatoes in a food processor until smooth. Transfer to a bowl; set aside. Pulse fish in food processor until finely chopped; stir into paste. Chill 4 hours to firm up.

2 Build a hot charcoal fire in a grill. Form 1 tbsp. fish mixture each around the end of 30 skewers; grill, turning, until charred, 4–5 minutes.

Satay Udang

(Shrimp Satay)

Makes 20 skewers

Ground macadamia nuts enrich this spicy Singaporean-style shrimp satay (pictured on 58).

- 1½ lb. (about 40) medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 tbsp. fresh lime juice
- ½ cup chopped shallots
- 1½ tbsp. dark brown sugar
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 8 Kaffir lime leaves, stemmed
- 5 macadamia nuts
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 3 red Thai chiles, stemmed
- 1 3" piece ginger, chopped
- 3 tbsp. peanut oil
- ⅓ cup coconut milk

1 In a bowl, toss shrimp and lime juice; set aside. Puree shallots, sugar, salt, lime leaves, nuts, garlic, chiles, and ginger in a small food processor. Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat; add paste. Cook, stirring, until oil separates from paste, 3–4 minutes. Stir in coconut milk. Cool. Stir into shrimp; chill 4 hours.

2 Build a hot charcoal fire in a grill. Thread 2 shrimp each on 20 skewers. Spoon marinade over shrimp; grill, turning, until charred, 3–5 minutes.

Saus Kacang Tanah

(Javanese Peanut Sauce)

Makes about 2½ cups

This creamy peanut sauce (pictured on 61) is perfect served with all satay.

- 1½ cups unsalted skinned roasted peanuts
- 6 tbsp. dark brown sugar
- 1½ tsp. dried shrimp paste, roasted
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 Holland or fresno chile, stemmed, chopped
- ¾ cup coconut milk
- 1 tbsp. cider vinegar
- ¾ tsp. kosher salt

Heat peanuts in a 12" skillet over medium heat; cook, stirring, until toasted, about 10 minutes. Transfer to a food processor and let cool; reserve skillet. Process until finely ground. Add sugar, shrimp paste, garlic, and chiles; process until very finely ground. Transfer paste to skillet and stir in coconut milk. Heat over medium heat, and cook, stirring, until oil begins to separate from paste, about 6 minutes. Stir in vinegar, salt, and ¾ cup water; cook, stirring, until the consistency of pea soup, about 4 minutes. Let cool.

Shish Kebab

Makes 20 skewers

This lamb kebab (pictured on 60) is adapted from a recipe in Annisa Helou's *Mediterranean Street Food* (William Morrow, 2002).

- 1¾ lb. lamb shoulder, cut into 1" cubes
- 3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 tbsp. minced fresh thyme
- ½ tsp. paprika
- ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper
- ¼ tsp. ground allspice
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. ground cumin
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp. ground sumac
- 24 cherry or grape tomatoes

1 In a bowl, combine lamb, oil, tomato, thyme, paprika, cayenne, allspice, cinnamon, cumin, garlic, salt, and pepper; chill 4 hours. Toss onion, sumac, and more salt in a bowl; let sit 30 minutes.

2 Build a hot charcoal fire in a grill. Thread 4 cubes lamb each onto 14 skewers, and thread 4 tomatoes each on remaining 6 skewers; grill, turning, until charred, about 5 minutes. Serve with onions.

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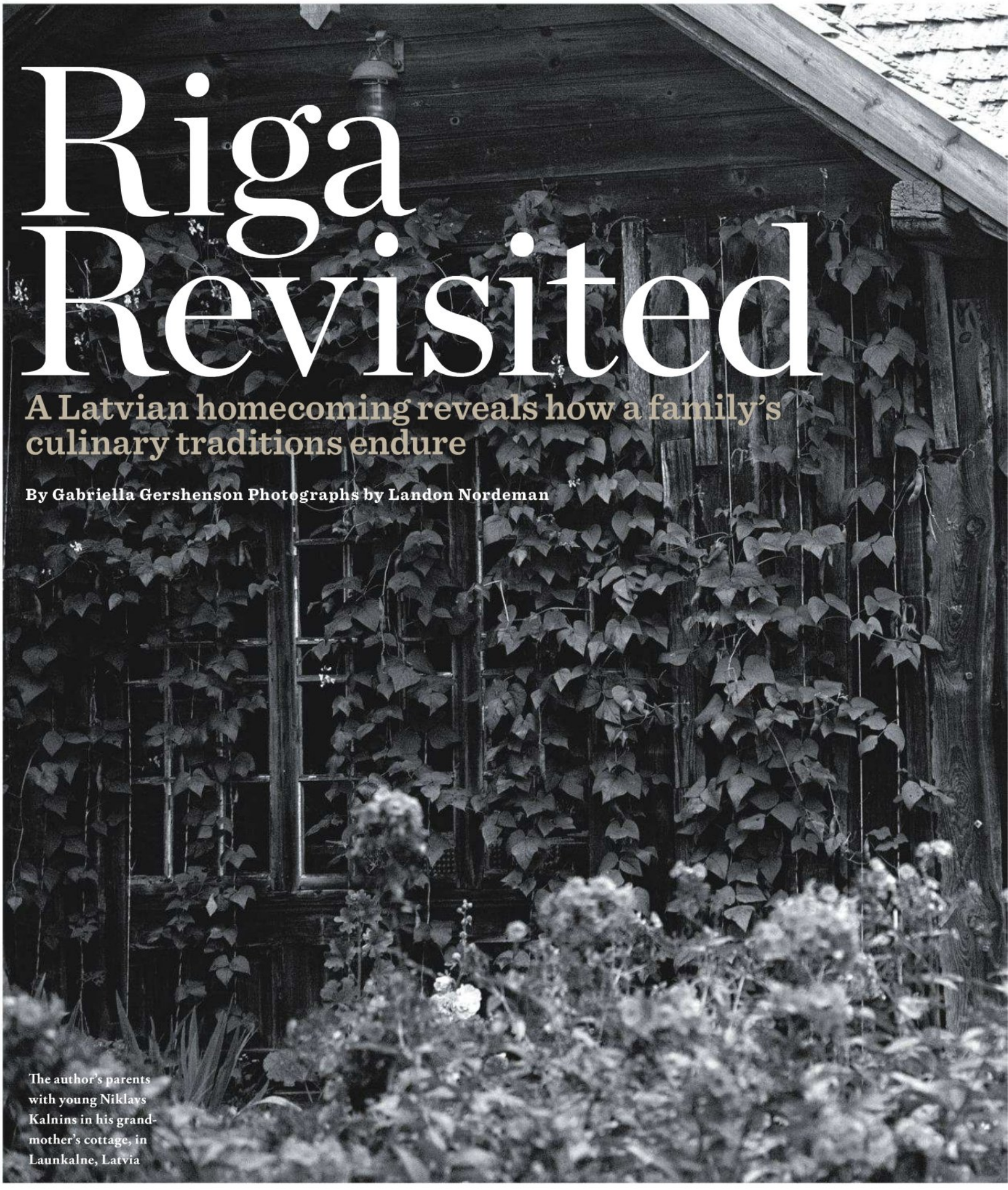
Riga Revisited

A Latvian homecoming reveals how a family's culinary traditions endure

By Gabriella Gershenson Photographs by Landon Nordeman



The author's parents with young Niklavs Kalnins in his grandmother's cottage, in Launkalne, Latvia

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I AM GAZING OUT OVER THE CENTRAL MARKET in Riga, Latvia, a massive complex stretching nearly 800,000 square feet across five former zeppelin hangars—repurposed remnants of a nearby WWI German airship base—on the east bank of the Daugava River. There are separate pavilions dedicated to fish, meat, produce, dairy, and bread, and they sprawl as far as the eye can see. I've heard about this market all my life, but until this moment, I'd never set eyes on it. My maternal grandmother, Rhoda Gurevich, was born in Riga, in 1926, and she used to shop here as a young girl with her mother, Anna Volpyansky. In her later years, my grandmother wrote a memoir in which she described the market's opulence; now, experiencing it with my parents on my first visit to Latvia, I feel like I am standing in her shoes.

Outside, scores of vendors offer all manner of local, foraged berries: red and black currants, lingonberries, cranberries, blackberries, and sea buckthorn, tiny, yellow berries that are deliciously sour. A woman spreads a blanket with chanterelles she harvested from the woods on the city's outskirts. We enter the fish pavilion, where the riches of Latvia's lakes, rivers, and ocean waters flop in shallow tubs: herring, eels, lamprey, hake, pike, and carp, which my great-grandmother used for gefilte fish. We try smoked smelts that look as though they've been dipped in gold and that taste of salt and smoke. In the meat pavilion, there are rows of rosy pink pork loin, used to make schnitzel-like *karbonāde*; ham hocks that have been smoked over alder wood; and *speķis*, cured and smoked lard, that melts on our tongues. Best of all is the dairy pavilion, where we find a food that my father has missed for years—a sweet, baked cheese made from *jaunpiens*, the milk of a cow that has just given birth—as well as an amazing array of the fresh cheeses and milk drinks, both cultured and curdled, that are a staple of the Latvian table. In another part of the market, we encounter the country's famed breads: *rudzu saldskābā maize*, a wheat-rye mix with a dark brown crust and a pale, caraway seed–speckled crumb, and the one I like best for its deep, fermented flavor, a moist and dense loaf called *klona maize*. As we shop and taste, I imagine my great-grandmother walking through this place, her heels clacking on the cement floor, appraising the foods she would buy and prepare for her family.

BACK IN 1975, MY PARENTS, Anna and Edward Gershenson, emigrated from Riga to the United States with my older sister, Shulamit, then two years old, seeking to escape the punishing Soviet rule and start a new life. Returning was an emotional choice. My parents hadn't gone back to Latvia, a small country of about 2 million people wedged between the Baltic Sea and Russia, in 35 years, perhaps out of fear of what they might feel or encounter. For me, the first child in our family to be born in the States, Riga, Latvia's seaport capital, held an almost mythical status. I knew the city only through old photos, my parents' memories, and my grandmother's pride.

Rhoda Gurevich grew up in Latvia's most prosperous era during its first period of independence, between the world wars. She followed my parents to the U.S., where she spent the final two decades of her life. Despite the horror of the holocaust and its aftermath, in which 90 percent of the country's Jewish population was annihilated, including the majority of our family, my grandmother believed in the Riga she knew during earlier times: a place where café culture thrived, where Jugendstil architecture proliferated, and where she was educated in a Hebrew gymnasium, which defined her as a Zionist and a proud Rigan. In fact, the city's cosmopolitan reputation, about which I'd always heard, goes back centuries. Since its beginnings, in 1201, Riga was a vital Baltic port. During Soviet rule, when citizens from far-flung republics visited Latvia to experience the West, the capital's reputation was for high culture, nearby white-sand beaches, and delicious food. Over the centuries, Latvia belonged to many different countries—Germany, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Sweden, and Russia—and these influences are reflected in the robust cuisine, where Eastern European ingredients like beets and soured dairy share the table with German pork dishes and Baltic fish.

Though my parents abandoned the old ways once they settled in Worcester, Massachusetts—they served no vodka at celebrations, no smoked or pickled fish, no candies from the Russian store—during the rare moments when they reflected positively on their former lives, the discussion always revolved around food. In recent years, I

Above: the author's father, Edward Gershenson, in 1962; facing page: a layered salad of herring, beets, potatoes, apples, dill, and hard-cooked eggs (see page 77 for recipe)

COURTESY OF THE GERSHENSON FAMILY

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Above: bacon turnovers (see page 77 for recipe); facing page: Rich Kalnins, with son Laris, watches his wife, Maija, harvest carrots.

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had become increasingly interested in my family's culinary history: It had dawned on me that the dishes I grew up eating—the salads of cucumber and tomato with sour cream; the whole, fried smelts; the cranberry mousse, a frothy concoction of farina, sugar, and cranberry juice that my grandmother would pour fresh milk over for added richness—were not Jewish, or Russian, as I had previously thought, but Latvian. So it seemed it was finally time to go back; time to get to know the place that had been a phantom influence on our American lives.

My mother, a caterer with a passion for baking, took early inspiration from the pastries that were sold in the city's many cafés and bakeshops, so when we arrived in Riga, this was one of the first foods we wanted to explore. She and my father used to frequent Café Nīca, on Lenin Street—now known by a Latvian name, Brīvības Iela—where one of their favorite desserts was *chaynaya bulochka* (Russian for tea bun), briochelike pastry sandwiching butter-enriched cream and crowned with a crunchy nut topping. In the state-run department store across from their apartment, my mother cherished the croissantlike *rozovaya bulochka*, or rose bun, its four corners pinched together to form a flaky pillow, and *biezpienmaizīte*, a yeast-dough tart filled with sweet cottage cheese and raisins.

On one of our first days in Latvia, we retrace the steps my parents once took through the Old City at Riga's center, with its serpentine cobblestone streets and mix of Romanesque, Gothic, Baroque, and Art Nouveau architecture. My parents still know the names of the streets and how to navigate them, but much has changed. The cafés my parents cherished have disappeared. In their place are tourist restaurants selling sushi, pizza, burgers, and Red Bull. My father used to relish the *cremeschnitte,* a cream-filled and iced puff pastry, from a shop called Vecrīga. Around the corner from the tall, travertine Freedom Monument, a symbol of Latvia's post–World War I era of independence, we discover one of two locations of this esteemed bakery; but when we sample the sweet, it is hard and wan, bearing no resemblance to the ethereal pastry my parents remember.

We wonder where Riga's famous café culture has gone. And though we know that the Central Market is brimming with ingredients, it also isn't obvious to us where Latvians go to eat. Unlike other capital cities, Riga doesn't have a tradition of street food, nor does it have a vibrant dining culture; most people eat at home. My Latvian-American friend Rich Kalnins, a journalist from Connecticut who moved to Riga in 2002, suggests we visit what he calls workman's cafeterias, self-service eateries based in high schools and municipal buildings, where traditional, simple foods are prepared from scratch. We meet Rich for lunch at a high school on Raiņa Bulvāris, a boulevard lined with embassies, university buildings, and other stately structures. He leads us to a side entrance, down a flight of stairs, and through a dark hall into a basement dining room painted an institutional mint green. Here, in this unlikely place, are the rustic dishes my father remembers eating as a student at Riga's Aeronautical Institute: sweet pancakes with homemade strawberry jam, potato pancakes with sour cream, boiled potatoes with dill, garlicky fried cutlets of pounded pork, earthy chilled beet soup, the requisite dark bread. Though I grew up with my parents' rhapsodizing about Riga's café culture, these are the staple foods that sustained them. And they taste wonderful.

A FEW DAYS LATER, RICH INVITES us to dinner with his family at the summer cottage of his mother-in-law, Anita Rūtīte. We drive 90 minutes northeast of Riga, stop-

Above: Anna Gershenson (right) in 1972 with friend Sima Bobovnikova; top, from left: *karbonāde* with chanterelle sauce; the author's parents; Central Market; a waffle cone with sweet cheese and berries (see recipes on pages 76 and 77)

COURTESY OF THE GERSHENSON FAMILY

ping along the way to chat with some foragers picking chanterelles by the roadside. Reaching the village of Launkalne, where we come upon Anita's cottage, a low, wooden structure surrounded by the fertile gardens that provide the family with the food they eat for much of the year. Even urban Latvians live off the land, Rich tells us as he greets us in the yard. "On August and September nights, you see people pulling up to their apartment buildings in Riga and unloading vegetables from their own farms or gardens," he says. "People grow their own food, not because it's trendy, but because it's a tradition that's been passed down."

Rich leads us into the kitchen, where Anita is at the stove, tending to the contents of a cast-iron pot: pork she bought at a nearby farm, and onions, garlic, potatoes, cabbage, tomatoes, and zucchini from her garden. With a smile, Rich's wife, Maija, puts my father, who rarely cooks, to work grating kohlrabi for a salad made with farmer's cheese and heavy cream. When he's finished, Maija hands him boiled beets to cube and toss with kidney beans, pickles, and sour cream. Maija has created most of these recipes herself, basing them on traditional flavors and the ingredients she has on hand. "You remind me of myself when I was a young mother," my mom tells her.

I follow Maija into the garden, where she plucks gnarled carrots from the earth for our soup, rinsing them off in a basin of rainwater. She is intimately familiar with every plant, herb, tree, and root that grows nearby. "Usually we cut quince in small pieces and put it in a jar with sugar for a beverage," she says. And then: "Here are milk apples, which are very good for jellies. The strawberries, we cut them down so they grow again next year. Do you see the Brussels sprouts? They'll be ready in one month." She pulls back an elephant-ear leaf to show me the miniature cabbages.

Following our dinner of stew, salads, and soup, Maija brings out a waffle iron—purchased "twenty years ago for nine rubles," she says—and plugs it into the wall to make fresh waffle cones to fill with a mixture of heavy cream, sugar, vanilla, cottage cheese, raspberries, and currants. It's a similar dessert, my mother says, to a treat called *trubochki* (Russian for cone) that she remembers from Riga's bakeshops. "This is the taste of the pastries that I loved," she says. "This is the taste I was looking for."

Days before our departure, Mārtiņš Sirmais, a chef in Riga and a well-known promoter of traditional Latvian cuisine, invites us to the home of his friend and co-worker Stanislava Balsa, who lives on the right bank of the Daugava River with her daughter Renata, in a concrete, Soviet-era apartment building. Stanislava is originally from Lithuania, but she has been in Riga for almost 50 years, and Mārtiņš calls her one of the best home cooks he's ever met. Her specialties, he says, are rustic but deeply flavorful Latvian comfort foods that reflect the country's culinary influences: *speķa pīrāgi*, Latvian bacon turnovers, likely a remnant of the early German period; *selyodka pod shuboy*, literally translated as herring in a fur coat, a showy layered dish of salt-cured herring and vegetables; and traditional Latvian *maizes zupa*, or bread soup, a sweet pudding made from dried fruits and rye bread.

Many Rigans have a patch of land outside the city where they grow their own food. It's not trendy; it's tradition

Stanislava is a smiling woman with a high bun of red hair and glittering gold teeth. She is also a force; she churns out dish after dish in her tiny kitchen. First she makes the tiny, football-shaped turnovers, pinching

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Rich Kalnins, the author's parents, and Niklavs Kalnins sit down for a meal of pork stew, beet and bean salad, wax beans, and kohlrabi salad at Anita Rūtīte's cottage (see recipes on pages 76 and 77).

together rounds of dough filled with diced bacon and onion. Mārtiņš gets started on a chanterelle cream sauce for Stanislava's *karbonāde,* which she dips in egg wash and flour in order to achieve a substantial crust. Next, Stanislava prepares the herring salad. On an oblong serving dish, she arranges the fish, covers it with a sauce of sour cream and mayonnaise, then atop that builds layers of grated beets, boiled potatoes, and sour apple. She adorns her salad with alternating stripes of fresh dill and hard-cooked egg white and egg yolk, the way my grandmother used to decorate her chopped liver.

Stanislava's kitchen is too small for all of us to help. My parents retire to her living room, and I go in to check on them, carrying a tray of tea, rye bread, and caraway-speckled cheese. I walk in on my mother reading to my father; she has taken a volume of poetry by Pushkin from Stanislava's shelf. My father joins along, reciting the words from memory: "An eagle that has soared from off some distant cliff, / Lawless as I, sweeps through the radiant air! / Here I see streams at their sources up-welling, / The grim avalanches unrolling and swelling! / The soft cloudy convoys are stretched forth below…"

He is fighting back tears. My parents came to Riga after 35 years, linking their pasts to their present. It's not what any of us expected, but it feels like home.

The Guide Riga

Dinner for two with drinks and tip: **Inexpensive:** *Under $20* **Moderate:** *$20–$80* **Expensive:** *Over $80*

For more information on visiting Riga, visit liveriga.com.

WHERE TO STAY

Hotel Neiburgs *Jauniela 25/27 (371/6/711-5522; neiburgs.com). Rates: $135 double.* Located in an Art Nouveau building in Riga's Old City, these 55 suites offer modern furnishings, kitchenettes, and great views. The restaurant features updated Latvian dishes like trout with black hemp butter and beef broth with chanterelles and caraway cheese.

WHERE TO EAT

Istaba *Krišjāņas Barona Iela 31 (371/6/728-1141). Moderate.* Chef Mārtiņš Sirmais, also a cookbook author and cooking show host, transforms seasonal foods into small plates—such as jellied tomatoes and kidney bean pâté—at this downtown bistro.

Lido *Krasta Iela 76 (371/6/750-4420; lido.lv). Inexpensive.* This location of the restaurant chain boasts folk-themed décor (windmills, a kiln), a bakery, dining room, brewpub, and cafeteria, where you can pick from a rotating selection of over 500 dishes, including salted, pickled, and curried herring, and *debesmanna* (cranberry mousse).

Rīgas Valsts Pirmās Ģimnāzijas Kafejnīca *Raiņa Bulvāris 8 (371/6/721-1594; r1g.edu.lv). Inexpensive.* Tucked in Latvia's oldest school (established in 1211), this cafeteria serves seasonal fare like *ķīselis* (red currant soup) and fried pork patties with potatoes in white sauce.

Slāvu Restorāns *Vaļņu Iela 19 (371/6/728-3974; slavu.lv). Moderate.* This Old City restaurant serves classic Russian dishes: rustic meat or cabbage pie, sorrel soup, and hand-formed sour cherry or potato dumplings, along with a range of infused vodkas.

WHAT TO DO

Lāči Factory Tour *Benūžu-Skauģi, Babītes (371/6/793-3227; laci.lv).* Just outside of Riga, this producer of rye bread and sweets offers tours that end with a visit to the bakery. Sample *Vecrīga*, a pastry puff filled with cream and farmer's cheese, as well as *biezpienmaizīte*, a raisin-studded sweet cheese pie.

MAP: THE M FACTORY

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Cūkgaļas Sautējums

(Pork Stew)

Serves 8–10

This one-pot dish of pork shoulder, vegetables, and prunes in a sweet and sour tomato sauce (pictured on page 74) is a specialty of home cook Anita Rūtīte's.

- 3 tbsp. canola oil
- 1¾ lb. boneless pork shoulder, cut into 1½" chunks
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 large yellow onion, minced
- 1 cup pitted prunes, halved
- 3 ribs celery, cut into ½"-thick slices
- 4 medium carrots, peeled and cut into ¾"-thick rounds
- 1 medium head cabbage, cored and roughly shredded
- 3½ lb. Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cut into 1½" chunks
- ⅔ cup canned tomato sauce
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 1 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- Sour cream, to garnish

Heat oil in an 8-qt. Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Season pork with salt and pepper, and, working in batches, add to pot and cook, stirring occasionally, until browned, about 10 minutes. Transfer to a bowl and set aside. Add garlic and onion to pot and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft, about 4 minutes. Without stirring, return pork to pot and begin layering with prunes, celery, carrots, cabbage, and potatoes. Whisk together tomato sauce, sugar, vinegar, and 1 cup water in a small bowl; pour over potatoes. Cover pot and cook, shaking occasionally, until pork and vegetables are tender, about 1 hour. Serve each portion with a dollop of sour cream.

Debesmanna

(Cranberry Mousse)

Serves 6–8

Farina undergoes an unexpected transformation from hot cereal to airy pudding in this tart-sweet Latvian dessert (pictured on facing page), which is typically served with milk poured on top.

- 3 cups unsweetened cranberry juice
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup farina or cream of wheat
- Milk, for serving (optional)

Bring juice and sugar to a boil in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Whisk in farina, reduce heat to medium-low, and cook, whisking constantly, until thickened, about 5 minutes. Transfer to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a whisk, and process on medium-high until thick and doubled in volume, about 12 minutes. Serve in bowls with milk poured over top, if desired.

Karbonāde

(Pork Cutlets With Chanterelle Cream Sauce)

Serves 8–10

These pounded pork cutlets (pictured on page 72) are as common in Latvian cafeterias as they are at wedding banquets. Here, they're elevated by a chanterelle cream sauce.

- ¼ cup canola oil, plus more as needed
- 1 cup flour
- 5 eggs
- 10 3–4-oz. pork cutlets, pounded to ¼"-thick
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 small yellow onion, minced
- 4 cups roughly chopped chanterelle mushrooms
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 2 tbsp. chopped fresh parsley

1 Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Place flour in a medium bowl, and whisk together eggs and ¼ cup water in another medium bowl; set both aside. Season cutlets with salt and pepper, then dredge 3 cutlets in flour. Dip in egg mixture until evenly coated, then place in skillet; cook, turning once, until golden brown and cooked through, about 5 minutes. Transfer to serving platter and repeat with remaining cutlets, adding more oil to the pan as needed.

2 Add butter to skillet, then onion; cook, stirring often, until soft, about 2 minutes. Add mushrooms, season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring often, until they release their liquid and begin to caramelize, about 3 minutes. Add cream and cook, stirring, until slightly reduced, about 2 minutes. Stir in lemon juice, and season with salt and pepper. To serve, pour sauce over cutlets, and sprinkle with parsley.

Rye bread pudding

Kartupeli ar Dillēm

(Boiled Potatoes With Dill)

Serves 6–8

Use Yukon Golds or other waxy potatoes, such as red or new potatoes, for this simple, comforting side dish (pictured on page 72).

- Kosher salt, to taste
- 2 lb. small Yukon Gold or new potatoes, unpeeled
- ⅓ cup sour cream
- 6 tbsp. minced fresh dill
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Bring an 8-qt. saucepan of salted water to a boil. Add potatoes and cook until tender, about 15 minutes. Drain potatoes and return to pot with sour cream, dill, butter, salt, and pepper. Cover pan with lid and shake until potatoes are well coated. Transfer to large serving bowl, and season with additional salt and pepper.

Kolrābju Salāti

(Kohlrabi Salad)

Serves 6–8

When grated and mixed with heavy cream and farmer's cheese, kohlrabi makes a creamy yet refreshing slaw (pictured on page 74).

- 1 cup farmer's cheese or cottage cheese, drained overnight in a cheesecloth-lined strainer
- ⅓ cup heavy cream
- ¼ cup peeled and grated Granny Smith apple
- 1 tbsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 2 medium kohlrabies, peeled and grated
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tbsp. sliced parsley leaves

In a large bowl, stir cheese, cream, apple, salt, kohlrabies, and pepper until evenly combined; let sit for 10 minutes, so flavors can marry. Garnish with parsley before serving.

Maizes Zupa

(Rye Bread Pudding)

Serves 6–8

A delicious way to use leftover rye bread, this sweet pudding (pictured at left) enhances the bread's tangy flavor with the addition of spices and dried fruits.

- 10 oz. Latvian or dark rye bread, cut into 1" cubes (about 3½ cups)
- 1 cup minced dried apricots
- ¾ cup minced dried prunes
- ¼ cup sugar, plus more to taste
- 2 tbsp. packed dark brown sugar
- 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. ground cloves
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- Sweetened whipped cream, to garnish

Heat oven to 350°. Place bread on a baking sheet and bake until lightly toasted and dry, about 15 minutes. Transfer to a medium bowl and pour over 4 cups boiling water; let sit for 20 minutes. Pass bread mixture through a food mill or coarse strainer into a 4-qt. saucepan; add apricots, prunes, sugars, lemon juice, cinnamon, cloves, and salt; bring to a

boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring often, until slightly reduced and fruit softens, about 15 minutes; season with more sugar, if you like. Let cool to room temperature; garnish with whipped cream.

Pilditas Vafeles

(Waffle Cones Filled With Sweet Cheese and Berries)

Makes about 20

Home cook Maija Kalniņa gave us her recipe for this summertime dessert (pictured on page 73). Fill the cones just before serving to ensure that they stay crisp.

FOR THE WAFFLES:

- 1 cup sugar
- 14 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 5 eggs
- 1 cup flour
- 1 tsp. cornstarch

FOR THE FILLING:

- 8 oz. farmer's cheese or cottage cheese, drained overnight in a cheesecloth-lined strainer
- ½ cup sugar
- 1¾ cups heavy cream
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 cup raspberries, blueberries, halved blackberries, or quartered strawberries

1 Make the waffles: Beat together sugar, butter, and vanilla on medium speed of a handheld mixer until pale and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add eggs, one at a time, until smooth. Add flour and cornstarch, and mix until just combined; let sit for 10 minutes. Heat a small thin-waffle iron or krumkake maker. Working in batches, cook 2 tbsp. batter until waffles are lightly browned, about 45 seconds. Quickly form waffles into wide, shallow cones; let harden.

2 Make the filling: Combine cheese and sugar in a food processor; process until smooth. Beat cream and vanilla in a large bowl until stiff peaks form; add cheese mixture to whipped cream, and gently fold to combine. Chill.

3 To serve, layer whipped cheese mixture and berries in cones until filled to the top. Serve immediately.

Pupiņi un Biešu Salāti

(Beet and Bean Salad)

Serves 6–8

Sour cream and tart pickles complement earthy beets in this salad (pictured on page 74) made by home cook Maija Kalniņa.

- ½ cup sour cream
- ⅓ cup mayonnaise
- 1 tbsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 2 cups cooked or rinsed, canned kidney beans
- ¼ cup minced gherkins or dill pickles
- 4 medium boiled beets, peeled and cut into ½" cubes
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tbsp. sliced parsley leaves

In a large bowl, whisk together sour cream, mayonnaise, and salt until smooth. Add beans, gherkins, and beets, and gently stir until evenly coated. Season with salt and pepper, stir to combine, then transfer to a large bowl or platter. Sprinkle with parsley before serving.

Cranberry mousse

Selyodka Pod Shuboy

(Layered Herring Salad)

Serves 6–8

Salt-cured herring becomes a lavish centerpiece when layered with apples and a sour cream–mayonnaise dressing in this beautiful composed salad (pictured on page 68).

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup sour cream
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 3 filets salted herring, rinsed and roughly chopped
- ½ small yellow onion, minced
- 2 medium peeled and boiled Yukon Gold potatoes, grated
- 3 medium boiled carrots, grated
- 6 hard-boiled eggs, whites and yolks separated, each passed through a fine strainer
- ½ Granny Smith apple, cored, peeled, and grated
- 2 medium boiled beets, peeled and grated
- ¼ cup chopped fresh dill
- Carrot rose, to garnish (optional)

Whisk together mayonnaise and sour cream in a small bowl and season with salt and pepper; set aside. Place herring in the bottom of a shallow 1½-qt. oval dish, and top with ⅓ dressing. Sprinkle onions on top, then cover with grated potatoes. Top potatoes with carrots and ½ the remaining dressing. Combine half the sieved egg yolks and half the sieved whites in a small bowl, then spread over dressing. Top with apples, then beets. Spread remaining dressing over beets to cover. Create three even rows across top of salad with remaining egg yolks and three rows with remaining whites; fill in gaps with rows of dill. Garnish with a carrot rose, if desired.

Speķa Pīrāgi

(Bacon Turnovers)

Makes about 60

These small bacon and onion pies (pictured on page 71) are a staple of Latvian festive tables. We prefer double-smoked bacon, but any thick-cut bacon will do.

- 1¼ cups milk
- 12 tbsp. unsalted butter, plus more for greasing
- ⅓ cup plus 1 tsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 2 ¼-oz. packages active dry yeast
- 5 cups flour
- 1 tbsp. canola oil
- 1 lb. double-smoked bacon, cut into ⅛" cubes
- 1 small yellow onion, minced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 tbsp. heavy cream
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 egg white, lightly beaten

1 Make the dough: Heat milk, butter, ⅓ cup sugar, and salt in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium heat until sugar dissolves; set aside. Whisk together remaining sugar, yeast, and ¼ cup water heated to 115° in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook; let sit until foamy, about 10 minutes. Whisk in milk mixture, add flour, and mix on low speed until dough forms. Increase speed to medium-high and knead until smooth, about 8 minutes. Cover bowl with plastic wrap; let sit until doubled in size, about 1½ hours.

2 Meanwhile, make the filling: Heat oil in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium heat, and add bacon; cook, stirring, until fat renders, about 6 minutes. Add onion and cook, stirring, until onion is lightly caramelized but bacon is not crisp, about 6 minutes. Remove from heat; season with salt and pepper. Let cool completely.

3 Heat oven to 400°. Whisk together cream and egg yolk in a small bowl; set egg wash aside. Transfer dough to a floured work surface and cut in half. Working with one half at a time, roll dough until ¼" thick. Using a 2½" round cutter, cut out dough rounds. Place 1 heaping tsp. bacon filling in center of each round, and, using your fingers, moisten edges of round with egg white; fold over to enclose filling, and pinch edges together to seal. Transfer turnovers, seam side down, to parchment paper–lined baking sheets, spaced 3" apart. Using a pastry brush, brush wash over each bun; bake until golden brown, 12–15 minutes.

TODD COLEMAN (2)

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SPECIALTY OF THE HOUSE

Charleston's soul food cafés serve some of the South's most inspired cooking

BY JANE AND MICHAEL STERN PHOTOGRAPHS BY TODD COLEMAN

No four-star restaurant offers bespoke cuisine to compare to lunch in the soul food cafés of Charleston, South Carolina. You'll spend no more than $10; plates and flatware will likely be disposable; and you'll drink sweet tea or lemonade instead of wine or beer, because alcohol, like loitering and swearing, is inappropriate in these places. Their humble locations may be far from the city's famously beautiful waterfront, but the meals you'll eat here are cooked by masters and are some of the South's most delicious.

From the street, with its dilapidated office chairs for outdoor furniture and colorful murals on its facade, Martha Lou's Kitchen is the last place you'd expect to find white tablecloth dining. But sure enough, we enter one afternoon, and Martha Lou Gadsden's daughter Debra leads us to a table covered by crisp, white linen. Altogether there are five tables in the restaurant, six if you include the one in back, where Debra sits and reads her Bible during leisure hours, seven if you also include the one nearest the kitchen, where Martha Lou and Debra position themselves so that Debra can rise to greet a new customer and Martha Lou can easily turn to the nearby stove. The tiny place is crowded with pictures of family and friends, a few encomia from the press, and a TV in the corner, tuned to a Christian network whose missionary message can barely be heard above the din of an conditioner that's propped up on a windowsill with a pepper shaker.

The menu is limited: fried chicken every day, plus a rotating repertoire of dishes that includes fried whiting, pork chops smothered in gravy, barbecued ribs, and stewed chitterlings, along with such sides as tomato-charged red rice and plain white rice, cabbage and collards, lima beans, okra soup, and corn bread. When we place an order for chicken and fish, Debra pauses a moment, looks us over, and says, "It's going to be a few minutes. We have to cook your meat. It's raw now." She waits for us to acknowledge that this is not fast food. It's nothing like it whatsoever.

We've been eating at Martha Lou's, and the city's other soul food cafés, for decades now, and we've come to realize that they're fundamental to the city's culinary identity. Their menus are rooted in the Gullah tradition—Gullah being the name given to slaves from West Africa who worked in the area's rice plantations and later settled in Charleston and the surrounding Lowcountry region. The Gullahs developed a magnificent makeshift cuisine of one-pot meals, transcendent

Debra Gadsden holding a tray of fried chicken with cabbage and collards at Martha Lou's Kitchen, in Charleston

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Bertha's okra soup; facing page: a customer eating stewed rutabagas at Dave's Seafood Carry-Out (see page 89 for recipes)

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seasonings, precision deep-frying, and countless iterations of okra soup (a relative of Creole gumbo, but with rice on the side instead of in the bowl) and *perloo* (sometimes called *pilau* or *prioleau* in Charleston), a slow-cooked, deeply flavored rice and meat stew. These traditions form the backbone of all Lowcountry cooking, even its fanciest incarnations; but it's in these cafés that you'll find the original essentials, including such low-on-the-hog delicacies as ham hocks, pigs' feet, tails, neck bones, and more.

We've always considered Charleston one of the country's most alluring eating destinations, with an astonishing variety of experiences, from moonlight oyster roasts to candlelight antebellum banquets. But on our most recent trip, the soul food cafés were our focus. We wanted to get into the kitchens, talk to the cooks and the customers, and savor this vital component of Southern food.

When our chicken and fish finally arrive, we determine that if Martha Lou's cooking has a signature, it's that everything is spiced, sugared, or otherwise seasoned to the max. Iced tea is shockingly sweet and shockingly lemony. Macaroni and cheese is less about palliation than excitement: the silky orange emulsion in which the noodles bask is flavored with hot peppers. The crust on the chicken and fish is salty, big-flavored, and a mighty chew. Bread pudding, a staple in local soul food restaurants and always listed among side dishes, is dense and sweet enough to pass as dessert.

A few miles north of here, the bare-table, plastic vine–festooned lunchroom called Ernie's hasn't had its name on a sign outside for years, but the waitress, Bessie Alexander, tells us they're hoping to put one up very soon. Few customers bother with a menu. Step up to the counter, and Alexander will recite what's available, delivering the list like a sea island melody rather than a waiter's obligatory recitation. One of the items of which she sings is their take on okra soup. No adjectives and no descriptions are offered, but regular customers know that it's a heaping pile of food that rises a couple of inches above the rim of the bowl—not just okra, but also significant pork bones from which great clods of brick red meat detach when you probe with a fork or spoon. Ernie's offers it as a bowl and as dinner, for $7 and $8, respectively—both of which are awesome meals.

Another simple-sounding local dish that is anything but minimal is lima beans. At Ernie's, the lima bean dinner is a gigantic meal that is delivered to the table on a battery of dishware: a plate for the rice, plus two bowls—one for beans, the other for a heap of neck bones. The limas are khaki-color sachets that have absorbed massive amounts of piggy flavor as they cooked. With the neck bones, or in place of them, you also can choose pigs' tails, which are little more than cylinders of glistening, warm pork fat that melt as they hit your tongue.

Lima beans, which may be fresh during summer months or frozen, are honored in southern cooking. Chef Philip Bardin, of the Old Post Office restaurant on Edisto Island, southwest of Charleston, rhapsodized to us once that eating lima beans at their best—plump and sopped with ham hock flavor from the cookpot—is "like eating steak." But as important as they are throughout the South, it is only in Charleston that they become supper's centerpiece.

At Bertha's Kitchen, which is located in North Charleston, a mostly industrial neighborhood, the Tuesday special of field peas and ham hock is served in the same deconstructed fashion as the lima bean supper. "The hocks and peas go together," says Julia Grant, the youngest of the late Albertha Grant's three daughters, who now run the place. "But I divide them—hock on the plate, peas in the bowl—so you can get to the meat more easily. That's the way our mother taught us."

Albertha Grant is a beloved figure in North Charleston. When she passed on, in 2007, the mayor spoke at her funeral. The South Carolina legislature issued a formal declaration of sympathy, praising her "Southern hospitality for over 25 years." Encouraged by oldest son Bobby, she started her restaurant, then unnamed, in 1979, in two rooms of a nearby motel—one for the kitchen, the other with a seating capacity of eight. Most of her business was takeout. Much still is. Bertha, who learned to cook from her mother, had already been known for her kitchen wizardry. Bobby recalls, "If she had a beautician's appointment on Saturday, the beautician would call Thursday or Friday and ask her to bring a plate of lunch."

Julia and her two older sisters, Linda and Sharon, fondly recall family dinners attended by neighbors' children, friends, and even strangers who were down on their luck. "She was everybody's mom," Julia remembers. "All the recipes we use are hers. Even when she retired, she made sure we did them right. No shortcuts! She would sit in her chair in the kitchen and watch over us." They still use Bertha's aluminum pots and pans. "We've got one for beans, one for cabbage, one for cooking greens. We would never switch them. And we've got cast iron for the smothered pork chops and chicken. The more you use it, the better it gets."

None of the recipes are written down, and the girls aren't eager to share them. We wonder out loud, "Did we taste fruit cocktail in the bread pudding?" Julia breaks out into a Cheshire cat grin and doesn't say a word. What makes the macaroni and cheese so rich and creamy? "It's the cheesiest!" is all she'll say, noting that many customers ask not for the tender center but for the chewy parts scraped from the top and edges of the casserole. Whatever the specifics, there's a refined balance to the taste of everything cooked in Bertha's kitchen; nothing is overly seasoned.

Above: Martha Lou's corn bread; facing page: Bertha's baked chicken with peppers (see page 88 for recipes)

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Strawberry cake at Bertha's Kitchen (see page 89 for recipe)

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Turkey *prioleau*, for instance, is a coastal comfort-food paradigm of earthy white rice laced with little shreds of white and dark meat, moist with turkey drippings and dotted with just enough pepper to boldface the flavor. For all their endless succulence, the fried pork chops and chicken are elegant enough that they would seem as right on Spode as they are on Styrofoam.

While the seasoning is deft and the cooking refined, it must be said that the very nature of several of Bertha's specialties is extremely luscious, or, put another way, extremely fatty. In particular, we're thinking of barbecued pigs' feet, or, as everybody here calls them, pig feets. Like hocks, they're cooked all morning until fall-apart tender, then dressed with good barbecue sauce before serving. For eaters accustomed to lean pork, the composition will be shocking: a few wisps of pink meat encased in amber fat that's best described as flavor on the bone.

Although much of Bertha's food is portioned out at the steam table—field peas, collards, pork and beans—some of the best main courses are cooked to order. Periodically, Sharon calls out from behind the counter, "Who's having fish?" Those who are getting close to the head of the line announce their intentions. Cooks get the fish in the fryer so it's ready when the customers step up to name their side dishes. When we order fried pork chops, which also require time, Julia uses a ballpoint pen to write the price of the meal on the bottom of a disposable plate and slides it over to the cashier, Brittany (her niece), so she can ring it up and we can pay. Once that happens, Julia takes the empty plate and puts it right side up on a kitchen counter where the pork chops will be arriving, hot from the fryer. She tells us to find a seat; she'll bring the chops to our table when they're ready. Inefficient? You bet. Soul-satisfying? Incomparably so.

If you think of fried food as cloddish, you need to eat seafood in the Lowcountry. Because the freshest oysters, shrimp, and flounder have always been so readily available, local cooks have evolved a style of cooking that's as exquisite as tempura, the point being to halo flavor rather than to smother it. Sheathed in a shatteringly crisp, translucent crust, the shrimp at Dave's Seafood Carry-Out is as good as it gets.

"Have a little patience. Good things come to he who waits," says Terry McCray, whose father started the legendary Dave's years ago. Waiting is a fundamental part of the Dave's experience, which allows customers to mix and mingle. Formerly located in a building that was famously disheveled, the new place is tidy and very tiny, a two-table street-corner eatery specializing in the fine art of deep-frying. Every meal comes in a takeaway clamshell container. Terry is the one and only staff member on duty, and on a busy evening, he'll have a few dozen orders going at a time. As he cooks, he takes more orders at the counter, as well as by phone, never writing anything down. Each piece of fish, each shrimp, is first dipped in a wash of eggs, milk, and water, then dredged in flour seasoned with garlic salt, pepper, and other spices known only to the McCrays.

Dave's everyday shrimp are what put this modest place on the map of Charleston's edible essentials: firm, pink crescents seasoned just enough to tease out all their ocean sweetness and delicately fried. The pork chop sandwich, served bone-in, sports a more significant crust, as do Tuesday's giant turkey wings. On Thursday, you can side your meal with hoppin' John, a Lowcountry staple of black-eyed peas and rice, made here with tender field peas instead.

Dave's opens late in the afternoon, but any devotee can tell you that the best time to come here is at three or four in the morning, when the joint is jumping with a cast of characters who arrive on bicycle and in stretch limos, wearing cutoffs and formal gowns. Terry is currently having big problems with the city of Charleston over that tradition, because authorities have determined that since he's in a neighborhood zoned for residential as well as commercial use, he must close at 11 p.m. In the old days, Terry tells us, that's not much later than when Dave opened in the first place!

The outcome has yet to be determined. "Friends of Dave's call after I'm supposed to close," Terry says. "I'm not going to send them away hungry, that's for sure."

The Guide Charleston, South Carolina

Dinner for two with drinks and tip: **Inexpensive:** *Under $20* **Moderate:** *$20–$80* **Expensive:** *Over $80*

WHERE TO STAY

Charleston Place *205 Meeting Street (888/635-2350; charlestonplace.com). $215 double.* With three excellent restaurants and a spa, this polished, 440-room luxury hotel in the city's historic district is a sumptuous place to stay.

Mills House Hotel *115 Meeting Street (843/577-2400; millshouse.com). $149 double.* An elegant, recently restored mid-nineteenth-century hotel in the heart of old Charleston.

King Charles Inn *237 Meeting Street (866/546-4700; kingcharlesinn.com). $89 double.* This conveniently located hotel has beautifully appointed rooms with period reproductions.

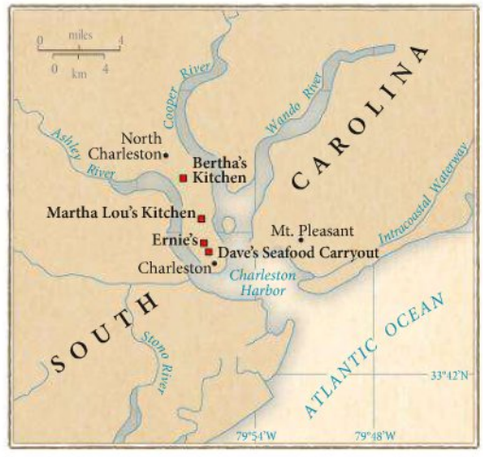
WHERE TO EAT

Bertha's Kitchen *2332 Meeting Street (843/554-6519). Inexpensive.* Lowcountry soul food at its best: red rice with sausage; fried chicken with a crackling, peppery red-gold crust; luscious pork chops; macaroni and cheese with crisp-chewy bits from the casserole pan. Don't miss the turkey *prioleau* (white rice cooked with drippings and chopped white and dark meat).

Dave's Seafood Carry-Out *42 Morris Street (843/577-7943). Inexpensive.* This temple of fried food showcases Charleston's marine bounty: fresh scallops, shrimp, and flounder dipped in flour and fried to perfection. Round out your meal with sides like hoppin' John, a Lowcountry staple of rice with black-eyed peas.

Ernie's *64 Spring Street (843/723-8591). Inexpensive.* There's no "Ernie's" sign—look for the "No Loitering" notice on the building. There's no menu, and the bill of fare changes daily, but standbys include the flavorful okra soup, the hearty and meaty lima bean dinner, red rice with pork chops, and an out-of-this-world bread pudding.

Martha Lou's Kitchen *1068 Morrison Drive (843/577-9583). Inexpensive.* A tiny eatery with big flavors: exuberantly spiced dishes like peppery mac 'n' cheese, lima beans with chunks of ham, a thick and vibrant okra soup. The fried chicken with a salty, chewy crust, cooked to order and served piping hot, is some of the best in town.



Martha Lou Gadsden's great-grandchildren, David Flowers and Deshay Flowers, in the café's dining room

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Baked Chicken With Peppers

Serves 8

Slow-braised chicken with peppers and onions is a soul food staple. This version (pictured on page 83), from Bertha's Kitchen, is seasoned with plenty of paprika.

- 8 whole chicken legs
- Kosher salt, freshly ground black pepper, and paprika, to taste
- ¼ cup canola oil
- 4 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 2 large green bell peppers, stemmed, seeded, and cut into ½"-thick strips
- 2 large yellow onions, halved lengthwise and cut crosswise into ½"-thick slices
- ¼ cup tomato paste
- 1 cup chicken stock

Heat oven to 400°. Season chicken liberally with salt, pepper, and paprika. Heat oil in an 8-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Working in batches, add chicken, skin side down, and cook until skin is golden brown, about 6 minutes. Transfer chicken to a large roasting pan, skin side up, and set aside. Return pan to heat and add garlic, peppers, and onions; cook, stirring, until vegetables begin to soften, about 8 minutes. Stir in tomato paste, cook for 1 minute, and then add chicken stock; scrape browned bits off bottom of pan and mix. Pour vegetables and stock around chicken, and bake until chicken is browned and cooked through, about 1 hour.

Cabbage and Collards

Serves 8–10

At Martha Lou's Kitchen, earthy collard greens and sweet cabbage (pictured on page 78) are steamed together for this unique spin on the Southern side of greens.

- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- 6 oz. slab bacon, cut into 1" slices
- 1 large yellow onion, roughly chopped
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 1 lb. collard greens, stalks removed and roughly chopped
- 1 large head cabbage (about 2 ¾ lbs.), cored and roughly chopped
- Kosher salt, freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Crushed red chile flakes, to taste

Heat oil in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium heat and add bacon; cook, stirring, until fat renders, about 6 minutes. Add onion and cook, stirring, until soft, about 5 minutes. Add chicken stock, then collards and cabbage; season with salt, pepper, and chile flakes. Cook, covered and stirring, until collards and cabbage are tender, about 25 minutes. Remove lid and continue cooking until liquid is reduced in volume, about 5 minutes.

Cornbread

Serves 8–10

In some parts of the South, cooks prefer corn bread that's slightly sweet (pictured on page 82), to counterbalance the salty, smoky flavors of vegetables stewed with pork.

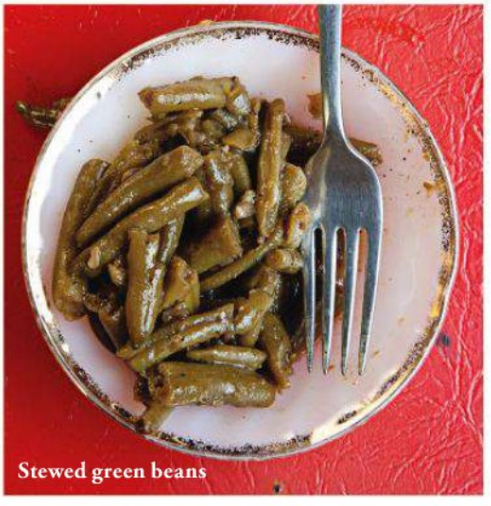
- ⅓ cup melted butter, plus more for pan
- 1 cup flour, plus more for pan
- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- ¼ cup sugar
- 4 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 egg, lightly beaten

Heat oven to 425°. Grease and flour an 8" x 8" square baking pan; set aside. Whisk together flour, cornmeal, sugar, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl. Add butter, buttermilk, and egg, and whisk until smooth. Pour into prepared pan and smooth top; bake until golden brown and a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean, about 25 minutes.

Fried Chicken

Serves 8

Simply seasoned and fried, with a thin, crisp coating and tender, juicy meat, the fried chicken at Martha Lou's Kitchen (pictured on page 78) is some of the best we've ever tasted.



Stewed green beans

- Peanut oil, for frying
- 4 cups flour
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 3–4 lb. whole chickens, cut into quarters
- 2 cups milk
- 2 eggs

Pour oil into an 8-qt. Dutch oven to a depth of 3", and heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 325°. Place flour in a large bowl, season with salt and pepper, and set aside. Season chicken all over with salt and pepper. Whisk milk and eggs in a large bowl, and, working in batches, dip chicken quarters in milk mixture, then dredge in flour, shaking off excess. Place in oil and fry, turning occasionally, until chicken is cooked through and dark brown, 15 minutes for white meat, 20 minutes for dark meat. Drain on paper towels and let cool for 5 minutes before serving.

Hoppin' John

(Black-Eyed Peas and Rice)

Serves 8–10

Sandra McCray, the owner of Dave's Seafood Carry-Out, riffs on this classic dish of rice and peas by adding cumin, coriander, and other spices. She uses field peas, but black-eyed peas are a more traditional choice.

- 2 strips thick-cut bacon, cut into ½" pieces
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 rib celery, finely chopped
- ½ large yellow onion, finely chopped
- ½ large green bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and finely chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 cup long-grain white rice, rinsed
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. ground coriander
- 2 whole cloves
- 1 stick cinnamon
- 1 bay leaf
- 2½ cups chicken stock
- 1 15-oz. can black-eyed peas, rinsed
- Freshly grated nutmeg, to taste

Heat oven to 350°. Heat bacon in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat; cook, stirring, until fat renders, about 4 minutes. Add garlic, celery, onion, and pepper, salt, and pepper, and cook, stirring, until soft, about 4 minutes. Add rice, thyme, cumin, coriander, cloves, cinnamon, and bay leaf, and cook until rice is lightly toasted, about 3 minutes. Add stock and bring to a boil. Cover pan with lid and place in oven; bake until liquid is absorbed and rice is cooked through, about 20 minutes. Stir in black-eyed peas and nutmeg and let sit, covered, for 10 minutes.

Macaroni and Cheese

Serves 10–12

This classic side dish from Bertha's Kitchen is made with white cheddar and topped with orange cheddar for a crunchy, golden brown crust.

- Kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 1 lb. elbow macaroni
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter
- ¼ cup flour
- 3 cups milk
- 1½ lb. (6 cups) grated sharp white cheddar
- Freshly ground black pepper and cayenne, to taste
- 8 oz. (2 cups) grated sharp regular cheddar

Heat oven to 375°. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and add pasta; cook, stirring, until cooked halfway through, about 3 minutes. Drain pasta and set aside. Heat butter in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Whisk in flour and cook until smooth, about 1 minute. Add milk and cook, whisking, until sauce is thickened and coats the back of a spoon, about 10 minutes. Add white cheddar and stir until melted and smooth; season with salt, pepper, and cayenne. Stir in pasta and transfer to a 9" x 13" baking dish; cover top evenly with regular cheddar and bake until bubbly and top is golden brown, about 35 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes before serving.

Okra Soup

Serves 6–8

Okra is often boiled or fried and served as a simple side in soul food restaurants, but in Charleston it often comes as a luscious vegetable soup with tomatoes, onion, and celery (pictured on page 80).

- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- 3 strips bacon, finely chopped
- ½ tsp. dried thyme
- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 rib celery, finely chopped
- 1 bay leaf
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 lb. okra, trimmed and cut into 1" slices
- 6 cups chicken stock
- 1 28-oz. can whole, peeled tomatoes, crushed by hand

Heat oil and bacon in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat; cook, stirring, until fat renders, about 5 minutes. Add thyme, garlic, onion, celery, and bay leaf, season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring, until soft, about 5 minutes. Stir in tomato paste; cook, stirring, until caramelized, about 2 minutes. Add okra, chicken stock, and tomatoes; bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low, and cook, until okra is very tender and soup thickens slightly, about 45 minutes.

Stewed Green Beans

Serves 8–10

Infused with the meaty flavor of a smoked turkey leg, these super-tender green beans (pictured on facing page) are a favorite side dish at Martha Lou's Kitchen.

- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter or bacon fat
- 1 large yellow onion, roughly chopped
- 1 lb. green beans, strings removed
- 1 small smoked turkey leg
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Heat butter in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add onion and cook, stirring, until soft, about 4 minutes. Add green beans, turkey leg, and 4 cups water. Season with salt and pepper, and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring, until green beans are very tender, about 1 hour.

Stewed Rutabagas

Serves 8–10

Sandra McCray at Dave's Seafood Carry-Out serves an inventive take on rutabagas (pictured on page 81) by stewing them with pork neck bones and ginger, then caramelizing them with sugar to deepen the flavor.

- ¼ cup canola oil
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 ribs celery, finely chopped
- 1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 1" piece ginger, peeled and finely grated
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 3 lb. rutabagas, peeled, cut into ¾" cubes
- 8 oz. smoked pork neck bones
- 4 tsp. sugar
- 1½ cups chicken stock

1 Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add thyme, garlic, celery, onion, ginger, salt and pepper, and cook, stirring, until soft, about 4 minutes. Set aromatics aside.

2 Heat oven to 400°. Place rutabagas and pork bones in a 9" x 13" baking dish and sprinkle with 2 tsp. sugar; add aromatics and stock. Cover with aluminum foil; bake until rutabagas are tender, about 1 hour. Uncover, and remove pork bones; cut meat away from bones, roughly chop, and return to rutabagas. Sprinkle rutabagas with remaining sugar, stir to combine, and continue baking until caramelized, about 5 minutes.

Strawberry Cake

Serves 12

Strawberry cake, topped with strawberry cream cheese frosting, is a favorite soul food dessert; this delicious version (pictured on page 84) comes from Bertha's Kitchen.

- 16 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened, plus more for greasing pans
- 3 cups flour, plus more for pans
- 1 tbsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 cup milk
- ½ cup seedless strawberry jam
- 3 tbsp. red food coloring (optional)
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup canola oil
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 3 eggs
- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 1 1-lb. box confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 1 tsp. strawberry extract

1 Heat oven to 350°. Grease and flour two 9" round cake pans; set aside. Whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt in a medium bowl; set aside. Whisk together milk, jam, and 2 tbsp. food coloring in a small bowl; set aside. Beat together sugar, oil, vanilla, and eggs in a mixer on medium-high speed until pale and smooth, 2–3 minutes. In 3 additions, alternately add dry and wet ingredients to sugar mixture, beginning and ending with dry; mix until combined. Divide batter between prepared pans and smooth tops; bake until a toothpick inserted in the middle of cakes comes out clean, about 40 minutes. Let cool 15 minutes, unmold, then cool completely.

2 In a large bowl, beat butter and cream cheese on high speed of a mixer until smooth and fluffy, 1–2 minutes. Add remaining food coloring, confectioners' sugar, and strawberry extract; beat until smooth. Place one cake upside down on a cake stand, and spread ⅓ frosting over top. Cover with second cake, top side up; frost top and sides of cakes with remaining frosting; refrigerate for 1 hour before serving. Serve at room temperature.

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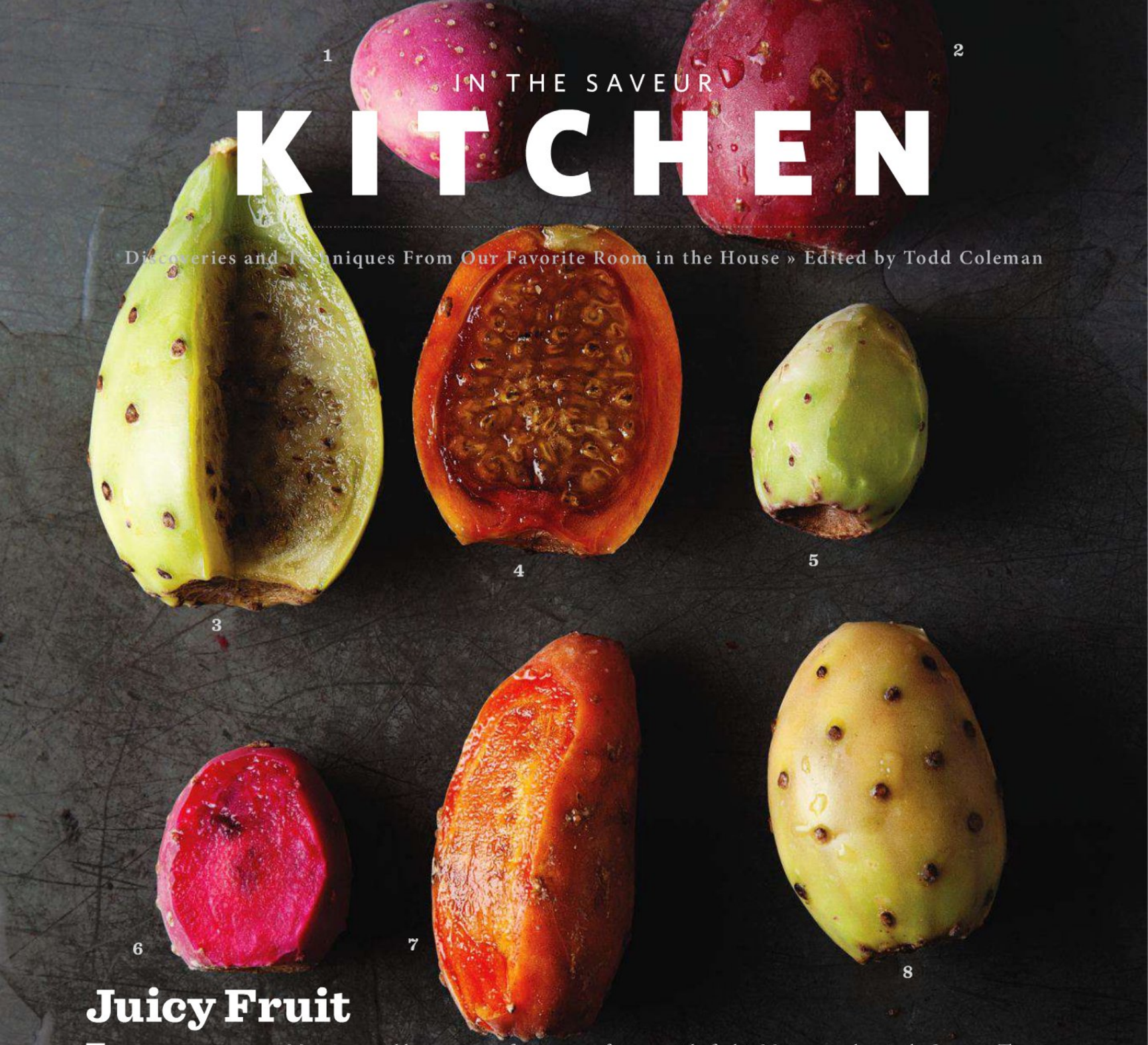

Juicy Fruit

In late summer in Mexico, prickly pear cactus fruits, or *tunas*, are everywhere—a refreshing snack eaten out of hand and a popular ingredient in candies, drinks, jams, and more. In Oaxaca, they spoon a dollop of pureed *tunas* on top of *horchata*, the milky rice-almond drink, but you can use it just about anywhere you'd use an apple—in salads, for example, or even in tarts. The cactus grows wild all over Mexico; it's also cultivated on plantations. Cactus pads, or *nopales*, are eaten year-round, but it's only in summer that the fruits reach maturity. Varieties number in the hundreds, with flavor profiles ranging from creamy-sweet to brisk and tart. The dark nubs on the skin contain sharp spines, but these are easily removed by slicing off the ends of the fruit, making lengthwise incisions, and peeling back the rind to reveal the luscious flesh. I sampled many delicious varieties when I reported this issue's story on Zacatecan cuisine ("Mexico Feeds Me," page 41); here are a few you might find in Mexican markets in the States: **1.** The **Juana** (sometimes called *roja*) has large, chewy seeds and tart, crimson flesh. **2.** The **roja pelona**, kiwilike in flavor, is free of thorns, and while the seeds of all *tunas* are edible, the ones in this variety are smaller than most. **3.** The widely available **cristalina**, also known as *zarca*, is juicy and crisp, with a sweet flavor like that of a white peach. **4.** The **naranjona** has a honey-sweet, subtly spicy flavor reminiscent of a ripe persimmon's. **5.** The wild **xoconostle** has a sour and chewy, edible peel that is sometimes used in savory stews. **6.** The most widely available wild variety, the **cardona** has soft seeds and a flavor that's both sweet and bitter, almost like a Luxardo cherry's. **7.** The **cuerno de venado** has a floral flavor; its high water content and small seed size make it a favorite snacking *tuna*. **8.** The yellow **platanera** has a tropical flavor like that of bananas, the fruit from which it takes its name. —*Javier Cabral*

TODD COLEMAN

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Hog Heaven

I KNEW THAT SOUTH CAROLINA'S Lowcountry cooking is famously pork-laden, but when I was photographing the establishments in this issue's feature on Charleston soul food ("Specialty of the House," page 78), I was nevertheless amazed to see so much pig, and so many parts of it. For me, Murray's Links & Sausages north of downtown Charleston was a sort of Rosetta stone to the local food culture. The family-run butcher and grocer has been supplying home cooks and restaurants alike with cured and fresh pork and other soul food staples for more than 50 years. When I visited one Saturday, owner Ernest Murray Sr. (pictured above, with his famous pork sausages, known as links) was packing hefty parcels of hocks, necks, feet, tails, and more. One woman came in and ordered rice pudding—not a dessert, but a terrinelike sausage of pork liver and rice suspended in pork gelatin that seemed like a relative of Cajun *boudin blanc*. I wondered how she'd serve it and asked, "You eat it just like that?" With a broad smile, she answered, "Every day." To place an order at Murray's, call 843/579-2836. —*Todd Coleman*

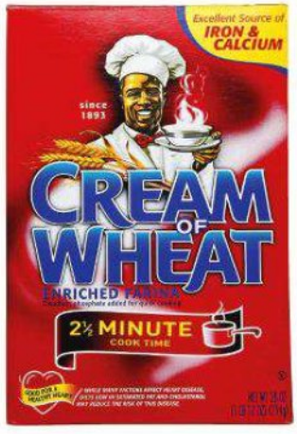
TODD COLEMAN (5)

Pick a Pepper

Since so many recipes in this issue call for dried pepper flakes and powders, we got to wondering why cooks would reach for one version over another. Take the dried chile flakes in the cabbage and collards recipes on page 88: These flakes (pictured at right, top) are usually coarsely crushed blends of dried mild and hot peppers, such as ancho, cayenne, and habanero, with the seeds left in for added heat. We love how they bring straightforward spiciness and a little added texture to everything they touch. Far more demure is ground Aleppo pepper (middle), which is used in the grilled *kafta* recipe on page 62. It has a sweet, earthy flavor and mellow heat. Unlike chile flakes, which have sharp edges and tough seeds, Aleppo blends smoothly into sauces, eggs, and other foods with a velvety or creamy texture you'd want to preserve. Another option is deep, smoky *piment d'Espelette* (bottom), a powder made with a chile grown in the Basque region of France that's prized for its mild heat and complex notes of peach and brine. It makes a vibrant addition to the *moules frites* recipe on page 36, and it dissolves beautifully in sauces and broths. You can swap in either Aleppo or *Espelette* whenever you might use chile flakes or even paprika. Just make sure to taste as you go, as each spice has a different heat level and will bring its own sweetness, sharpness, and other distinctive qualities to a dish. —*Jen Polachek*

Wheat Wonder

THE RECIPE FOR cranberry mousse on page 76 is one passed down by my maternal grandmother, Rhoda Gurevich. She was a native of Latvia, where they call the dessert *debesmanna,* or heavenly farina—an apt name indeed. Made from cranberry juice that's boiled with sugar and cooked with farina (or Cream of Wheat, as most of us know the ingredient in the States), it is whipped until light and fluffy. When the recipe first made the rounds at the SAVEUR office, everyone was fascinated to see that farina, a fine-grain cereal made from the endosperm of hard red wheat kernels, could be used as a vehicle for making an airy mousse. How did that work? Paula Figioni, associate professor of food science at Johnson & Wales University, explained. "With whipping, it's all about trapping air by forming a flexible film around the air bubbles," she said, "then having enough structure in the film so that the bubbles don't escape. Both wheat gluten and wheat starch are film formers, and both provide thickening, for stability."



When my mother, Anna Gershenson, came to the SAVEUR kitchen to demonstrate the recipe, we found that, depending on the temperature of the cranberry-farina mixture, when whipped, the consistency varied dramatically. If she cooled the mixture, it would produce denser, glossier results. If she whipped it while it was warm, the dessert tripled in volume and was far airier. "As the starch cools, it becomes more rigid and therefore doesn't have the flexibility to form a film around newly formed air bubbles," explained Figioni. In Latvia, variations of the dessert are made with cherry juice, black currant juice, and strawberry juice. What they all have in common, apart from being delicious, is acidity, which probably contributes to the airiness of the dessert. "Wheat gluten becomes stretchier in the presence of acid," Figioni said, "so the acid likely improves volume." —*Gabriella Gershenson*

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Recipes by Category

Appetizers

Bacon Turnovers 77
Layered Herring Salad 77
Okra Soup 89
Potato Tacos 55
Spiced Mexican Corn 53

Main Dishes

Meat and Poultry

Baked Chicken With Peppers 88
Chicken Satay 63
Chile-Rubbed Beef Satay 62
Fried Chicken 88
Indian Chicken Kebab 63
Lamb Satay 63
Lebanese Beef Kebabs 62
Lemongrass Pork Satay 62
Pork Cutlets With Chanterelle Cream Sauce .. 76
Pork in Red Chile Sauce 53
Pork Neck and Purslane Stew 53
Pork Stew 76
Shish Kebab 63
Thai Pork Satay 62
Zacatecas-Style Green Mole With Chicken ... 55

Seafood

Balinese Tuna Satay 63
Shrimp Satay 63
Southern Thai-Style Mussel Satay 62
Steamed Mussels and Fries 36
Quick Fish Filets in Tomato Sauce 22

Vegetarian

Enchiladas 53
Masa Cakes Stuffed With Eggs 54
Squash Blossom Sauté 53
Zacatecas-Style Baked Masa Cakes 54

Side Dishes

Black-Eyed Peas and Rice 88
Boiled Potatoes With Dill 76
Cabbage and Collards 88
Corn Bread 88
Fava Bean Soup 55
Kohlrabi Salad 76
Macaroni and Cheese 88
Mexican Rice 53
Potatoes in Green Chile Salsa 55
Stewed Beans With Salsa 53
Stewed Green Beans 89
Stewed Rutabagas 89

Condiments & Desserts

Cranberry Mousse 76
Javanese Cucumber and Carrot Pickle 62
Javanese Peanut Sauce 63
Rye Bread Pudding 76
Stout Ice Cream 16
Strawberry Cake 89
Sweet Soy Dipping Sauce 62
Thai Cucumber Relish 62
Three Milks Cake With Coconut 55
Waffle Cones Filled With Sweet Cheese and Berries 77

THE PANTRY

A Guide to Resources

In producing the stories for this issue, we discovered ingredients and information too good to keep to ourselves. Please feel free to raid our pantry!

BY BEN MIMS

Fare

When in Kingston, Jamaica, visit **I-Scream** at the Devon House (26 Hope Road, Kingston; 876/929-7028; devonhousejamaica.com) to sample 27 flavors of ice cream, including stout, guava, and soursop. Dine at Hong Kong's **Manor Restaurant** (440 Jaffe Road, Causeway Bay; 852/2836-9999) to sample its gold coins and other Cantonese specialties. When in Virginia, visit the **Carter Family Fold Museum** (3449 A. P. Carter Highway, Hiltons; 276/386-6054; carterfamilyfold.org) to hear bluegrass and country music and sample traditional Appalachian dishes. To purchase **American Fruits liqueurs and cordials** ($14.99 each for a 375-milliliter bottle), go to Warwick Valley Winery & Distillery (114 Little York Road, Warwick, New York; 845/258-4858) or visit their website (wvwinery.com).

Cellar

For information on where to purchase the **Bonci "San Michele" 2007**, contact Angelini Wine ($24 for a 750-milliliter bottle; 860/767-9463; angeliniwine.com). For information on where to purchase the **Domodimonti "Deja V" 2008**, contact Bay Field Importing ($15 for a 750-milliliter bottle; 516/869-9170; bayfieldimporting.com). For information on where to purchase the **Garofoli "Podium" 2008**, contact Omni Wines ($22 for a 750-milliliter bottle; 718/353-8700; omniwines.com). For information on where to purchase the **La Monacesca "Mirum" 2007**, contact Tricana Imports ($47 for a 750-milliliter bottle; 888/874-2262; tricana.com). For information on where to purchase the **Umani Ronchi "Plenio" 2007**, contact Wines From Bedford ($35 for a 750-milliliter bottle; 914/833-2725; winesfrombedford.com). For information on where to purchase the **Villa Bucci "Riserva" 2006**, contact Empson USA ($52 for a 750-milliliter bottle; 703/684-0900; empsonusa.com).

Essay

To visit Ray Turner's smokehouse and sample his smoked, local **eels**, contact Delaware Delicacies Smoke House (420 Rhodes Road, Hancock, New York; 607/637-4443).

Zacatecas

To make the Zacatecas-style baked gorditas recipe or the masa cakes stuffed with eggs recipe (see page 53), buy **masa harina**, available from MexGrocer.com ($3.95 for a 2.2-pound bag; 877/463-9476; mexgrocer.com). To prepare the enchiladas recipe (see page 53), use **Mexican chocolate**, available from World Wide Chocolate ($5.99 for an 18.6-ounce package; 800/664-9410; worldwidechocolate.com) and **queso añejo**, available from iGourmet.com ($5.99 for an 8-ounce piece; look for "asadero"; 877/446-8763; igourmet.com). To prepare the pork in red chile sauce recipe (see page 53), buy **Mexican chocolate**, available from World Wide Chocolate (see above). To prepare the squash blossom saute recipe (see page 54), use **squash blossoms**, available from Melissa's/World Variety Produce (price varies by availability; 800/588-0151; melissas.com), which also carries the fresh **epazote** (price varies by availability; see above), that you'll need to make the spiced Mexican corn recipe (see page 53). To make the pork neck and purslane stew recipe (see page 55), buy **purslane**, available from Melissa's/World Variety Produce (price varies by availability; see above). To prepare the fava bean stew recipe (see page 55), use **peeled fava beans**, available from The Great American Spice Company ($8.94 for a 16-ounce bag; 877/677-4239; americanspice.com). To make the tres leches cake with coconut recipe (see page 55), use **coconut milk**, available from iShopIndian.com (see Satay, below).

Satay

To make the pork satay recipe (see page 74), buy **oyster sauce**, available from Asian Food Grocer ($1.38 for a 10.8-ounce bottle; 888/482-2742; asianfoodgrocer.com). To prepare the Lebanese beef kebabs recipe (see page 74), use **Aleppo pepper**, available from My Spice Sage.com ($3.25 for a 1-ounce bag; 877-890/5244; myspicesage.com). To prepare the Southern Thai-style mussel satay recipe (see page 74), purchase **red curry paste**, available from Indian Foods Company ($4.99 for a 14-ounce container; 952/593-3000; indianfoodsco.com); **pandan leaves**, available from Grocery Thai ($7 for an 8-ounce package; 818/469-9407; grocerythai.com); **kaffir lime leaves**, available from Kalustyan's ($6.99 for a 5-gram package; see above); and **tamarind paste**, available from Grocery Thai ($3.60 for a 16-ounce package; see above), which you'll also need to make the lamb satay recipe (see page 75). To make the seafood satay recipe (see page 75), use **kaffir lime leaves**, available from Kalustyan's ($6.99 for a 5-gram package; 800/352-3451; kalustyans.com), which you'll also need for the shrimp satay recipe (see page 75), and the kecap sambal (see page 74). Also for the kecap sambal recipe, buy **kecap manis**, available from Online Food Grocery ($3.69 for a 20.9-ounce bottle; 800/720-9350; onlinefoodgrocery.com). To make the Javanese peanut sauce recipe (see page 75), use **dried shrimp paste**, available from eFoodDepot.com ($1.89 for a 10-ounce block; 866/256-9210; efooddepot.com) and **Mae Ploy coconut milk**, available from Phil Am Food ($2.49 for a 19-ounce can; 201/963-0455; philamfood.com) or **Chaokoh coconut milk**, available from iShopIndian.com ($2.25 for a 13.5-ounce can; 877/786-8876; ishopindian.com). To prepare the Turkish kebab recipe (see page 75), buy **sumac**, available from Kalustyans ($5.99 for a 3-ounce bag; see above). For a selection of **satay skewers and picks**, contact PickOnUs.com (800/874-2587; pickonus.com).

Riga

To make the rye bread pudding recipe (see page 76), use **Latvian rye bread**, available from Baltic Shop.com ($24 for a 4.4-pound loaf; 800/506-2312; balticshop.com). To prepare the layered herring salad recipe (see page 77), purchase **salted herring** (look for schmaltz fillets), available from Russ & Daughters ($3.25 for each filet of 7–8 pieces; 800/787-7229; russanddaughters.com).

Kitchen

Contact Melissa's/World Variety Produce (800/588-0151; melissas.com), and Frieda's, Inc. (800/241-1771; friedas.com) to find varieties of **tunas**, or cactus fruits, from Mexico. Purchase **piment d'Espelette**, available from Zingerman's Mail-Order ($16 for a 25-gram jar; 888/636-8162; zingermans.com) and **Aleppo pepper**, available from MySpiceSage.com (see above).

Correction

In our March 2011 issue, the headnote for the Haitian stewed chicken recipe (page 88) mentions lime juice, which is not called for in the recipe.

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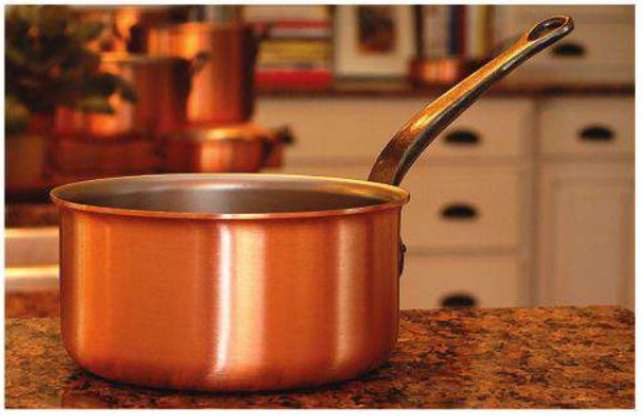

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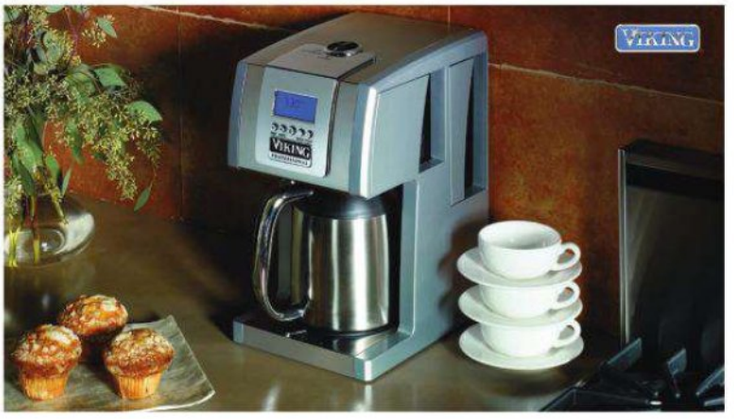

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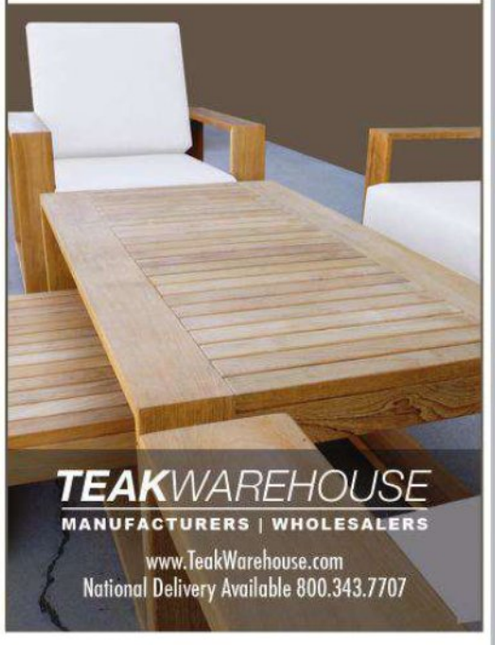

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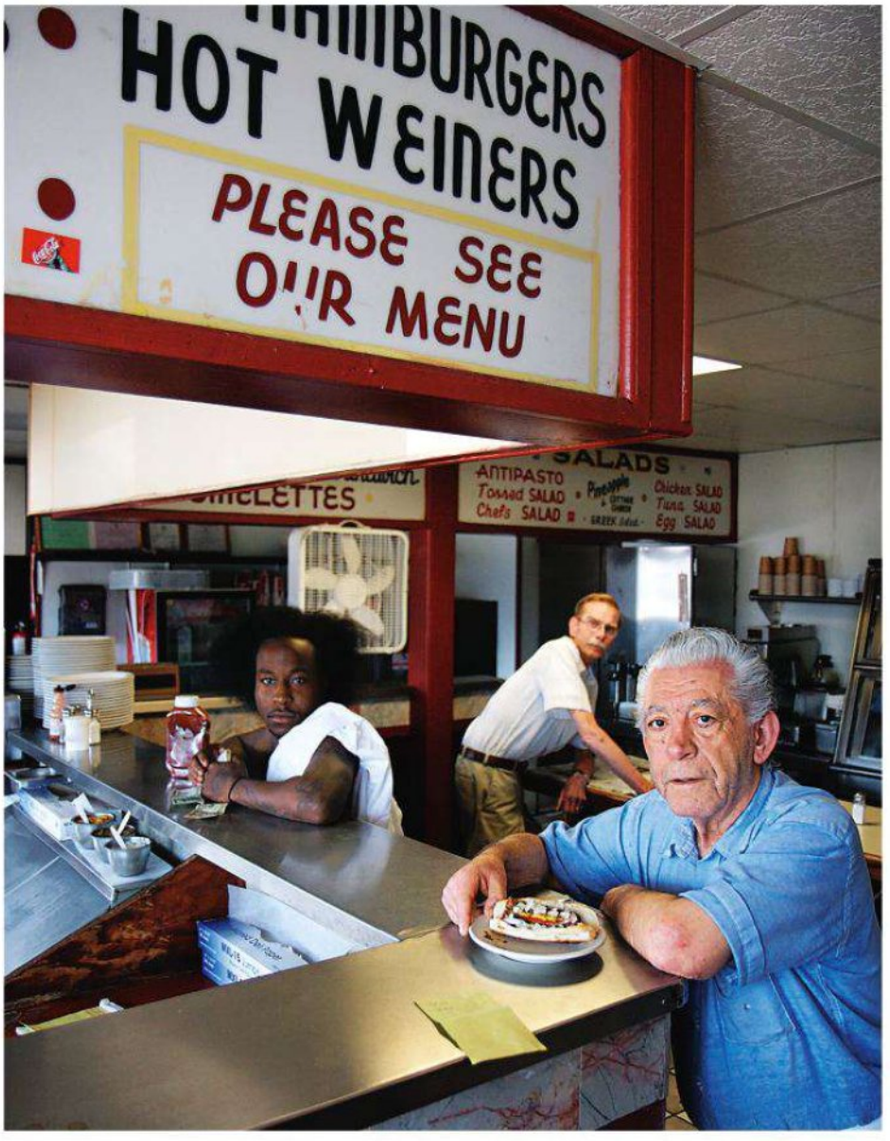

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PLACE Fidas Restaurant, Providence, Rhode Island

Arthur Fidas poses with his signature dish, the local genus of chili dog known as a hot weiner.

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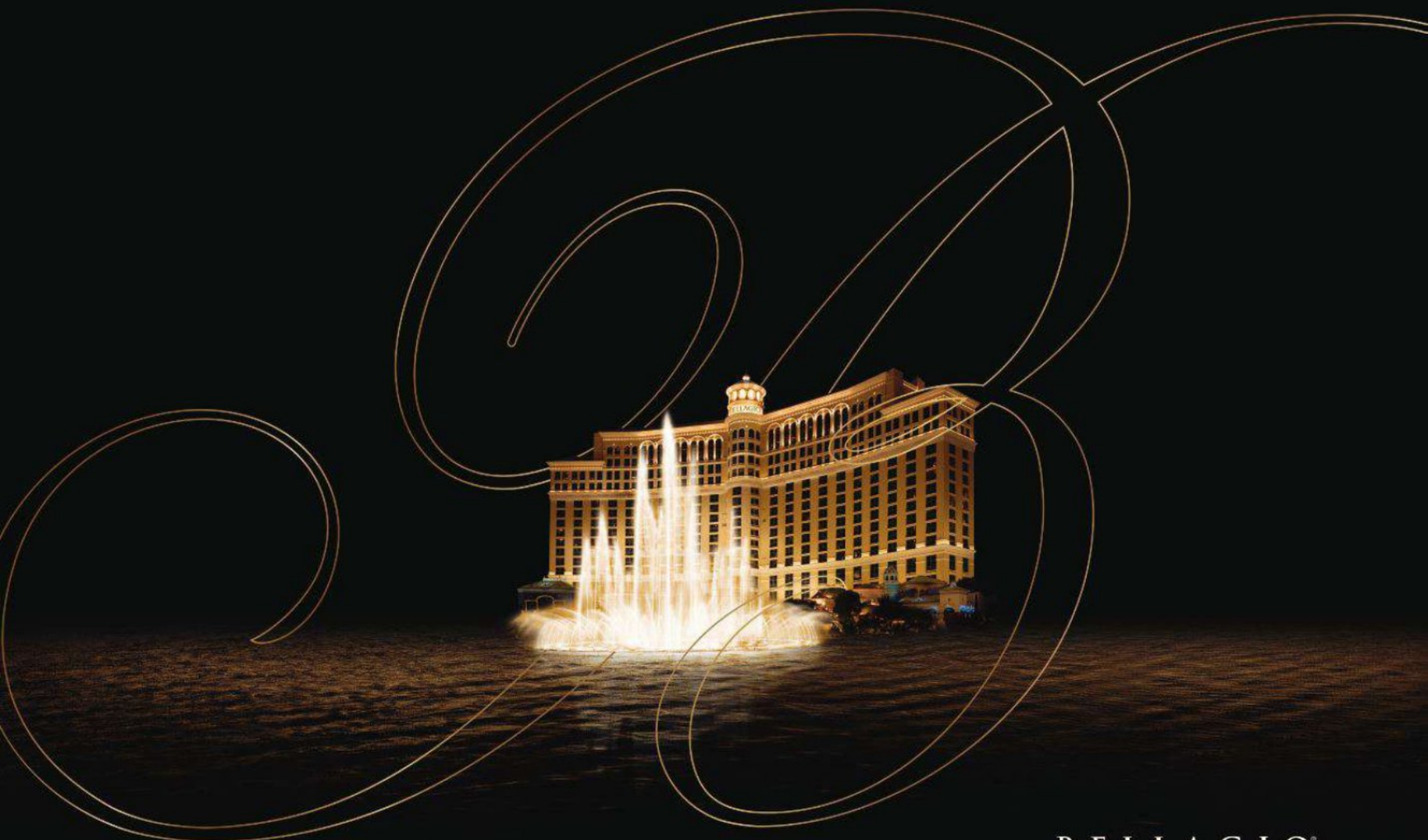

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